

Huskers Illustrated

NEWS PLEASE RUSH

Volume 26, No. 4

APRIL 2006 • \$3.95

Cody
GLENN

Matt
HERIAN

Tierre
GREEN

Ola
DAGUNDURO

Leon
JACKSON

Stewart
BRADLEY

SPRING

Marlon
LUCKY



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Always Questions

Injuries, position changes, replacing key players among the many story lines this spring



Brian Hill

SO MANY QUESTIONS and so little time. That could be the theme of spring practice any year at any school.

When Nebraska opens spring drills March 22, the questions will involve: players who missed most or all of last season with injuries — tight end Matt Herian, linebackers Steve Octavien and Stewart Bradley and guard Andy Christensen; players changing positions, such as safety Tierre Green and I-back Leon Jackson; and replacing key players who exhausted their eligibility, including I-back Cory Ross, defensive linemen Le Kevin Smith and Titus Adams, safety Daniel Bullocks and punter Sam Koch.

A year ago, the focus entering spring practice was on the quarterbacks. Could anyone from a group of five other candidates unseat incumbent Joe Dailey?

One of those five was junior college transfer Zac Taylor, a late addition to the 2005 recruiting class. Taylor, who would win the job in the spring and take every snap last season until late in the 10th game, discusses the difference a year can make in our feature story in this edition of *Huskers Illustrated*.

On The Cover

Players returning from injuries, players changing positions and players who are candidates to take over for those who have exhausted their eligibility include (clockwise from lower left) linebacker Steve Octavien, I-back Leon Jackson, defensive tackle Ola Dagunduro, safety Tierre Green, tight end Matt Herian, I-back Cody Glenn, linebacker Stewart Bradley and I-back Marlon Lucky. Cover photos by Scott Bruhn. Design by Bret McVey, Blaze Graphics.

Taylor has established himself at quarterback, but Nebraska's coaches will be searching for a number of other answers during the 15 practices that conclude with the annual Red-White Spring Game April 15 (12:30 p.m.).

That same day, the Husker baseball team is scheduled to play Texas A&M as part of its second home Big 12 Conference series. NU, missing many of the components from last year's record-setting season, began to answer many of its questions during an 8-2 start that included victories over Notre Dame, Arizona and Minnesota.



The young Huskers are led by a strong pitching staff that includes All-America starters Joba Chamberlain and Johnny Dorn and closer Brett Jensen. Jensen, who had a school-record 16 saves last season, is featured in this month's issue.

At presstime, the Huskers were to begin a 16-game homestand, the longest since a 17-game homestand in 1992, against Southeastern Conference power Alabama. Included is a Big 12-opening series with Kansas March 24-26.

Things finally turned for the Nebraska basketball team, which ended a seven-game Big 12 Tournament losing streak that dated back to an opening-round victory over Texas Tech in 1999. The 71-64 victory over Missouri, Barry Collier's first in the tournament, came as speculation swirled about his future. The Huskers went 5-3 during the first half of the conference schedule but just 2-6 the rest of the way and finished the regular-season on a three-game skid.

At presstime, the NIT looked like a strong possibility.

We'll have wrap-ups of the winter sports and updates on the spring sports next month. Of course, we'll take a good look at what happened in spring football and see how many questions were answered. ■

Huskers Illustrated (ISSN 0279-3474) is published monthly January through May and August, bi-monthly June/July and weekly September through mid-December except open dates. Single issue cost \$3.95 (year-book \$7.95); subscription rate for one year (19 issues) is \$51.95. First Class postage is available for an additional charge of \$19.00 per year. Foreign postage \$34.00.

Huskers Illustrated is published by Landmark Community Newspapers, 2623 Regency Rd., Lexington, KY 40503. Periodicals postage paid at Lexington, KY, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Huskers Illustrated*, 2623 Regency Road, Lexington, KY 40503.

Address all editorial-related correspondence to *Huskers Illustrated*, 3210 NW 3rd St., Lincoln, NE 68521.

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For subscription inquiries, mail to *Huskers Illustrated*, 2623 Regency Rd., Lexington, KY 40503. Allow four to six weeks for response. Give old and new addresses and enclose latest mailing address label when writing about your subscription.

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Huskers Illustrated

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10 WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES

A year ago, Zac Taylor was the new guy, a transfer brought in to provide additional competition at quarterback. *By Mike Babcock*

NEXT ISSUE

The May 2006 spring football wrap-up edition will be mailed about April 24. Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

Finally Looking Back

For the first time he was looking back, Eric Piatkowski said as he stood in the hallway just off the northeast corner of the basketball court at the Devaney Sports Center, waiting to be introduced along with other members of the 1990-91 team at halftime of the Texas Tech game.

"I've never thought much about the past," he said.

His focus has always been the future, the NBA Draft after his collegiate eligibility was exhausted and once he made it in the NBA, the next season and with it the next contract.

He was a first-round draft pick of the Indiana Pacers, who immediately traded his rights to the Los Angeles Clippers, for whom he played his first eight seasons. He spent one season with the Houston Rockets before being traded to the Chicago Bulls prior to the 2004 season.

"I haven't really had a chance to slow down and start reminiscing, thinking about stuff in the past," he said. "This is the first weekend I've ever really had this."

He still plays for the Bulls; he's in his 12th professional season. But the league was on a break for its All-Star Game, enabling him to spend the weekend in Lincoln attending a reunion of the 1990-91 team, being inducted into the Nebraska Basketball Hall of Fame and having his No. 52 jersey retired.

Piatkowski, a freshman on the 1990-91 team, drew a standing ovation from the Tech-game crowd, which included students wearing white T-shirts with "52" in red on the front.

The reception "gave me goose bumps," he said, standing at mid-court with wife Kristin, daughter Paige and son Jace — also in No. 52 shirts. "This is awesome."

His number was the third from the men's team to be retired; Dave Hoppen's No. 42 and Stu Lantz's No. 22 are those others. Karen Jennings' No. 51 also has been retired.

Large photographs of Piatkowski, Hoppen, Lantz and Jennings now hang from the rafters on the north side of the Sports Center arena. The last three were unveiled during the Kansas game.

Piatkowski is the second-leading scorer in Cornhusker history, with 1,934 points, and one of only two in school history to play on four NCAA Tournament teams — Bruce Chubick is the other.

Piatkowski holds the school record for points in a game with 42 against



Eric Piatkowski was honored at halftime of the Nebraska-Texas Tech game Feb. 18.

Oklahoma in the first round of the 1994 Big Eight Tournament, and his scoring average that season, 21.5 points per game, ranks third on the all-time list, behind Hoppen's 23.5 in 1984-85 and 22.1 in 1985-86.

"No one has exemplified the great things about college athletics" better than Piatkowski, Nebraska athletic director Steve Pederson said during the halftime ceremony.

An emotional Piatkowski introduced his parents, Walt and Lynne, describing them as "a great example of what I believe parents should be. So thank you to my parents," he said.

He came from Rapid City, S.D., and redshirted his first season. "It was five of the best years of my life that I spent at Nebraska," he told the appreciative crowd.

And the last four were as good as the

PIATKOWSKI 59TH INDUCTEE

Eric Piatkowski was the 59th inductee in the Nebraska Basketball Hall of Fame, and the 54th player. The last player to be inducted was Beau Reid in 2003.

Players

*Sam Carrier (1911-13)
*Mathias "Mutt" Volz (1923-25)
Carl Olson (1928-29)
Willard Witte (1928-30)
*Don Maclay (1929-31)
*Steve Hokuf (1930-31-33)
Walter Henrior (1932-33)
*George Wahlquist (1933-36)
Paul Amen (1936-38)
Elmer Dohrmann (1936-38)
Floyd Ebaugh (1936-38)
*Robert Parsons (1936-38)
Don Fitz (1939-41)
Sid Held (1940-42)
*Claude Retherford (1947-49)

Bob Cerv (1947-50)
Milton "Bus" Whitehead (1948-50)
Bob Pierce (1949-51)
*James Buchanan (1950-52)
Fred Seger (1952-54)
Willard Fagler (1952-55)
Bill Johnson (1952-55)
Rex Ekwall (1955-57)
Jim Kubacki (1956-58)
Gary Reimers (1956-58)
Don Smidt (1956-58)
Wilson Fitzpatrick (1958)
Herschell Turner (1958-60)
Al Maxey (1959-60)
Tom Russell (1961-62)
Daryl Petsch (1962-64)
Grant Simmons (1964-66)
Nate Branch (1965-67)
Willie Campbell (1965-67)
Tom Baack (1966-68)
*Stuart Lantz (1966-68)
Bob Grattopp (1968-70)
Tom Scantlebury (1968-70)

Leroy Chalk (1969-71)
Marvin Stewart (1969-71)
*Chuck Jura (1970-72)
Larry Cox (1973-76)
Jerry Fort (1973-76)
Bob Siegel (1975-78)
Brian Banks (1976-79)
Andre Smith (1978-81)
Jack Moore (1979-82)
Stan Cloudy (1983-84)
Dave Hoppen (1983-86)
Brian Carr (1984-87)
Rich King (1988-91)
Beau Reid (1988-91)
Clifford Scales (1988-91)
Eric Piatkowski (1991-94)

Coaches

W.H. Browne (1933-40)
*Harry Good (1947-54)
Jerry Bush (1955-63)
Joe Cipriano (1964-80)
Moe Iba (1981-86)
*First class inducted, 1989

Cornhuskers have ever had.

Why the other numbers were retired:

Hoppen (1983-86) is the leading scorer in Cornhusker men's history. The three-time, first-team All-Big Eight center from Omaha scored 2,167 points, despite missing the final 11 games of his senior season because of a knee injury suffered in a game at Colorado. That Moe Iba-coached team was the first in Cornhusker history to advance to the NCAA Tournament.

Hoppen also ranks third in career-rebounding in the modern era (post-1952), with 773. Venson Hamilton (1996-99) is first with 1,080. Leroy Chalk (1969-71) is second with 782.

Lantz (1966-68) was a two-time all-conference selection on pressing, fast-breaking teams that were a combined 51-24 under coach Joe Cipriano. He was an outstanding rebounder as well as scorer. Nebraska finished 20-5 his sophomore year and played in the National Invitation Tournament for the first time when he was a junior. He ranks 13th on the Cornhuskers' career-scoring list. Despite playing guard, at 6-foot-3 and 175 pounds, he led the team in rebounding in each of his three seasons, in fact.

Jennings (1990-93) was the most decorated basketball player, men or women, in school history. She was a first-team All-American as a senior and received the Margaret Wade Trophy as the nation's best collegiate player. She was the Big Eight female athlete of the year in 1993 and a two-time conference player of the year as well as a three-time, first-team all-conference honoree.

In addition, she was a three-time, first-team Academic All-American. She scored 2,405 points and pulled down 1,000 rebounds during her career. Jennings led coach Angela Beck's Huskers to a 23-8 record and the second round of the NCAA Tournament in 1993 — they lost to USC in Los Angeles.

QUICK HITS



Nebraska's 1984 Olympic gymnasts (from left) Jim Hartung, Jim Mikus and Scott Johnson were honored in February.

OLYMPIC SPIRIT

In true Olympic spirit, the Nebraska athletic department honored the three Husker members of the 1984 Olympic gold-medal winning men's gymnastics team during the Nebraska-Colorado men's basketball game Feb. 22 at the Devaney Sports Center.

The ceremony recognized Jim Hartung, Scott Johnson and Jim Mikus for their accomplishments in recently being inducted into the United States Olympic Hall of Fame along with the 1984 U.S. Gold Medal Olympic team.

While at Nebraska, Hartung, Johnson and Mikus lifted the Huskers to three national team championships (1981, 1982 and 1983) under the direction of coach Francis Allen, and combined for 10 event titles, with Hartung also being named the 1982 Nissen Award winner. Hartung and Johnson were selected to compete in two Olympics, Hartung in 1980 and 1984, and Johnson in 1984 and 1988.

BACK-TO-BACK

B.J. Padden became Nebraska's first back-to-back Big 12 champion since Bryan Snyder in 2002, and nine Husker wrestlers earned bids to the 2006 NCAA Championships at the Big 12 Championships in Ames, Iowa.

In the team race, Nebraska took third with 52 points, just a half point behind conference runner-up Oklahoma. Oklahoma State won the team championship with 80 points.

Padden earned his second career conference championship with his 4-0 win over Jake Rosholt of Oklahoma State in the 197-pound finals.

At 174 pounds, Jacob Klein fell in the final to top-ranked Ben Askren of Missouri, 17-6. Klein's second-place finish, however, was good enough for him to move on to the NCAA Championships for the fourth time in his career.

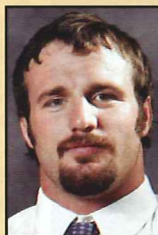
Other Huskers advancing to the NCAA Championships March 16-18 in Oklahoma City were: **Third place:** 125 — Paul Donahoe; 133 — Patrick Aleksanyan; 141 — Dominick Moyer; 149 — Robert Sanders; **Hwt** — Jon May; **Wild card:** 165 — Marc Harwood; 184 — Vince Jones

REPLACING ALEX

Steve Edlefsen is Alex Gordon's successor as the Nebraska baseball team's third baseman. And so is Jake Mort. At least they were early in the season, rotating at the position depending on whether the opposing pitcher was right-handed or left-handed.

Edlefsen, a switch-hitter, is a sophomore transfer from Barton County (Kan.) Community College, where he redshirted last season after undergoing Tommy John surgery. Mort, a right-handed hitter, is a redshirted freshman from Nebraska City, Neb.

Ryan Bohanan was heir apparent to Gordon, the national collegiate player of the year in 2005, but the sophomore from Goddard, Kan., is missing the season following shoulder surgery.



B.J. Padden

GOOD START

Preseason All-American Joba Chamberlain was the Big 12 pitcher of the week after opening the season by allowing two singles in 7 1/3 innings in a 4-3 victory against North Carolina State at Charleston, S.C. He didn't allow a run and struck out seven, with 97-mph fastballs.

He was limited to 100 pitches.

Chamberlain's second start was similarly impressive, even though he was charged with the 3-2 loss against No. 4-ranked Rice at the Rice Invitational in Houston. He allowed all three runs on six hits in 6 2/3 innings, striking out 10 and walking only one before giving way after 105 pitches.



J. Chamberlain

VOLLEYBALL COMMITS

Tara Mueller, the Gatorade Player of the Year in Arizona, has made an oral commitment to sign a letter of intent with Nebraska, according to the Lincoln Journal Star. The 6-foot-2 Mueller is a junior at Desert Mountain High School in Scottsdale, Ariz. The Huskers had previously received an oral commitment for 2007 from Lindsey Licht, a high school player in the Denver area.

GOING PRO

The good news was, Dmitrijs Milkevics won the men's 800 meters at the Big 12 Indoor Track and Field Championships in a Bob Devaney Sports Center record 1:46.46.

The bad news was, the junior from Riga, Latvia, announced later that he wouldn't be competing for Nebraska at the NCAA Championships in Fayetteville, Ark., March 10-12. Rather he would be competing in the IAAF World Indoor Championships as a professional that same weekend.

Milkevics was the 2005 NCAA outdoor champion in the 800 meters.

BACK ON THE FIELD

Former Cornhusker quarterback Eric Crouch, the 2001 Heisman Trophy winner, signed a two-year contract with the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League in mid-February. "I really feel like I can play this game for a while," the 27-year-old Crouch told the Omaha World-Herald.

The Argonauts' incumbent quarterback is 42-year-old Damon Allen, a 22-year CFL veteran who is expected to play one more season before giving way, presumably, to Crouch.

NOT QUITE IDENTICAL

Apparently, former Cornhusker strong safety Daniel Bullocks is slightly faster than twin brother Josh. Daniel ran the 40-yard dash in 4.38 seconds at the NFL Combine in late February. Josh's best 40 time at the Combine was 4.46 seconds. Josh was a second-round pick of the New Orleans Saints in the 2005 NFL draft, the 40th player selected. Daniel is currently considered a second- or third-round pick.

MOVING ON

Former Cornhusker football assistants Tony Samuel and George Darlington have changed programs. Samuel, who coached the defensive ends at Purdue last season after eight years as the head coach at New Mexico State, was hired as head coach at Southeast Missouri State, an NCAA Division I-AA school in Cape Girardeau, Mo., while Darlington left Marshall to be the secondary coach at Louisiana Tech.

Nebraska opens the 2006 against Louisiana Tech on Sept. 2 at Memorial Stadium.

SIXTH PLACE

The United States four-man bobsled team that included former Cornhusker football player Curt Tomasevicz finished sixth at the Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy.

IN MEMORIAM

Orval Borgialli, the Cornhusker wrestling coach from 1964 to 1978, died at age 70 in Lincoln in late February, following a three-year battle with lymphoma. ■

Living Out A Dream

Quarterback Taylor says 'it's just a matter of the opportunity presenting itself'



Mike BABCOCK

"it's the weirdest thing ever," said Taylor. "I start to notice it more and more."

He'll pay for his order at the window, and as he's driving away, the attendant will wish him luck or compliment him on last season. "It's funny how it works out, I guess," he said.

His decision to come to Nebraska certainly has worked out for most concerned. He was recruited to provide competition for Dailey until prize recruit Harrison Beck arrived. But by the time Beck began practice in training camp, Taylor was in charge. And Dailey was in North Carolina.

Taylor was among the least anticipated members of coach Bill Callahan's second recruiting class, a class that ranked with the nation's best. He was a late addition, an afterthought really.

As it worked out, however, he was the best in his class. Without him, Nebraska wouldn't have won eight games. Without him, the Cornhuskers probably wouldn't have finished .500. And without a toughness that belies an easy-going personality, Taylor wouldn't have finished, period.

He made throws under pressure, time after time, releasing the ball just before impact with a defender intent on doing him bodily harm. Yet he always got up, or at least nearly always.

Kansas State knocked him out, granted with a clean hit. But that was it.

Taylor is living out a dream at Nebraska. "I always wished this would happen," he said. After an unsuccessful beginning to his college career at Wake Forest — he red-shirted and then spent a season as a back-up before deciding to transfer to Butler County (Kan.) Community College — he imagined it happening at a mid-major, Memphis or, most likely, Marshall.

"It's just a matter of the opportunity presenting itself," he said.

And the opportunity presented itself at Nebraska. He proved to be the perfect fit for Callahan's complicated offense, quick on the up-take and capable of throwing short and long. As the line becomes more effective at protecting

him, he'll be able to do more of the latter.

Plus, receivers continue to be a recruiting priority. Like Taylor, junior college transfer Tyrell Spain enrolled at mid-year and will participate in spring practice. And more new receivers will arrive in the fall, joining productive carry-overs, among them Nate Swift and Terrence Nunn.

Swift, another of the surprises last season, led the team with 46 receptions for 641 yards and seven touchdowns. Nunn was tied with I-back Cory Ross for second with 43 catches. In fact, Ross is the only receiver among the top six who won't be running routes in the spring. Add tight end Matt Herian, who should be back at full-speed in the fall if not the spring, and the passing-game prospects look bright. A healthy Herian — whom former running backs coach Tim Albin once described as being like a 7-11 store, always open, 24-7 — could make a big difference with his ability to stretch the defense.

In any case, writers who cover the team couldn't have asked for more from Taylor, an unheralded junior college transfer, from Norman, Okla., no less, breaking Cornhusker passing records during his first season. And though it probably shouldn't matter, it does. Taylor has been accessible, ever willing to accommodate interview requests, with good-natured tolerance of repetitive questions.

It's part of his personality. "I view myself as a normal person," he said.

On the street, he doesn't draw much attention. "I'm not a very big guy, so I really don't stand out. People don't notice me unless they hear my name or something like that. So I don't get it as bad as someone like Cory Ross, someone a little more noticeable," he said.

Drive-through windows are the exception. "It is weird when you're at Arby's and the guy stops and talks to you," said Taylor, who's not complaining, though. "It's a cool deal."

He described his drive-through celebrity status to students in a sports writing class at the university, taking time after throwing for a 20-minute interview session.

"It's the weirdest thing ever," he said. "You guys should come with me some time. I always hope they'll give me extra mozzarella sticks at Arby's. But I haven't got any yet."

He'd have to return them, anyway, as an extra benefit. The attention is all he can accept. ■



Zac Taylor passed for 2,653 yards and 19 touchdowns.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 25 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

Fast Starts

Nebraska's junior college transfers making big contributions



Curt McKEEVER

THEIR PHYSICAL SIZE isn't going to overwhelm you, but the Nebraska baseball team's new junior college transplants are all looking like monsters early in their Husker careers.

Three weeks into the season, NU was off to an 8-2 start thanks in large part to power surges by outfielders Luke Gorsett (a 6-foot-2, 200-pounder) and Nick Jaros (5-10, 200).

Gorsett — a Denver product who at Garden City (Kan.) CC last season led the juco ranks with 24 home runs and 71 RBIs — was named the most outstanding player at Minnesota's Dairy Queen Classic after helping the Huskers sweep three games. During the event, the right-handed hitter became the first Nebraska player in 11 seasons to hit for the cycle (during an 11-1 win against Notre Dame). He exited the tourney with a .405 batting average that included five homers and 11 RBIs.

Jaros — who at Maple Woods (Mo.) CC last year hit .350, drove in 55 runs and had 31 steals — was NU's No. 4 hitter after the first three weekends with a .375 average that included four extra-base hits and 9 RBIs.

Then, there was Andrew Brown (6-0, 195), the Texas junior college player of the year last season, hitting .333.

While Brown may dream of getting the chance to play professionally, he sounds content to hang with the Huskers for more than a season.

"You've got to work at it every day to get there," Brown said of his aspirations, "and they're giving me everything I need."

A first baseman who also will play outfield and be a regular at designated hitter, Brown was one of 15 Nebraska players who got their first taste of Division I ball when the Huskers played their first four games in Charleston, S.C. In his only start, against The Citadel, he produced three hits, including a home run, and finished the weekend 4-for-5.

Two of Brown's three roommates, Jaros and third baseman Steve Edlefsen (6-2, 180), also had impressive debuts. The left fielder Jaros went 6-for-16 and drew four walks. He was 3-for-4 in NU's opener, delivered a key two-run double in a 4-3 win against No. 19 North Carolina State and capped the weekend by knocking in the winning run against Richmond with a 12th-inning single. Edlefsen, who came to NU from Barton County (Kan.) CC, produced a steady glove in his three starts and also went 4-for-15 at the plate.

The trio's other roommate is senior catcher Jeff Christy, who also came to the Huskers from junior college.

"When we're out in the outfield (during practice) it's a little joke between us," Brown said of the junior college fraternity, "but nothing too big."

Actually, NU's influx of juco talent figures to be a very big deal.

"We've got a good problem is what we have," said coach

Mike Anderson, referring to the junior college transfers.

The best news for Anderson is that he guesses he'll have to deal with those "problems" longer than just this season.

"In terms of being a two- or three-tool kind of guy that is draftable," he said, "if you look at Andrew, he maybe just doesn't have the speed and the arm. Gorsett's got the arm, but maybe he doesn't have the speed. Nick Jaros has tremendous bat speed . . . but there's something that scouts say they need to develop, so hopefully they can develop here."

"Right now, I look at all of them as two-year guys. We were drawn to these guys because of certain things, but we also know they have holes in their game they've got to develop. That's why they chose Nebraska."

Gorsett's gamesmanship came to light in NU's fourth game against Richmond. With the Huskers down 4-2 with one out in the ninth inning, he lined a two-run homer to send the contest into extra innings.

That hit was only a prelude to what happened in the Metrodome against Notre Dame. Having already singled, doubled and homered, Gorsett came to bat in the eighth inning and lined a two-strike pitch to the wall in left-center.

"I figured I had a good chance," he said of making it to third, which he did with a head-first dive into the bag. "Coach A gets up and he's like, 'You don't want to make the first out going first to third.' I was like, 'Yeah, but I was going for the cycle.' He had to think about it for a second."

Kind of like how Gorsett and Nebraska's other junior college transplants once had to think about the Huskers' commitment to a two-strike hitting philosophy. That, of course, is no longer an issue.

"I'm thinking more about the team (in) how I approach the at-bat," Jaros said. "Moving runners, every little thing about the game, they really force you to think about it and not just go up there with

a purpose for yourself, but to take some pitches and work on that pitcher's arm.

"I believe (it's making me more valuable). I've been working the count a lot better, not swinging at as many curveballs in the dirt, changeups, just working to get a pitch I can handle."

While that seems to be the case with all of Nebraska's juco transfers who are lineup regulars, Anderson is mindful that the Huskers' road is long and winding.

"To me, any junior college kid, I don't care how good you are, we've had some great ones that have struggled," he said. "It's always my belief their second year is the best. They're going to have ups and downs. They just got off to a good start."

Actually, monster starts. ■



Junior Luke Gorsett hit for the cycle against Notre Dame.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams. He can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com



Zac Taylor and the Nebraska offense went through some growing pains, including the Missouri game (above), when the junior quarterback was sacked four times and threw two interceptions. His development was a key element in an 8-4 season that ended with three straight victories.

What a Difference a Year Makes

By Mike Babcock ● Photos by Scott Bruhn



Taylor views this spring 'completely different'

Even though the start of spring practice was three weeks away, Zac Taylor was excited about the Red-White game. "I'm already looking forward to it," he said. "It's going to be a blast."

"I'll be viewing it completely different than I did last spring."

That difference is a function of experience, of course. A year ago, Taylor was the new guy, a transfer from Butler County (Kan.) Community College, brought in to provide additional competition at quarterback, where Joe Dailey had started every game the previous season.

Taylor was an unheralded member of coach Bill Callahan's second recruiting class, a late addition really. Nebraska didn't contact him until after the final game of the regular season.

By spring's end, however, barely five months after that initial contact, he was atop the depth chart. And by sea-

son's end, he had proven to be the prize recruit of his class, with his name in the school record book for, among other things, single-season passing yards, completions and attempts.

His development was a key element in an 8-4 season concluded with three consecutive victories, the last two against Colorado and Michigan, in the Alamo Bowl. The residue of those two, in particular, is an optimism that has attended winter conditioning and will carry over to spring drills.

Taylor will look about the same, though he is a bit heavier.

"I still want him to get bigger and stronger," quarterbacks coach Jay Norvell said on the day after the Alamo Bowl game victory. "I tease him all the time. I ask him if he's 210 (pounds) yet."

When Norvell asks that question now, Taylor can answer yes.

He is eating "a little bit healthier," said Taylor, who played last season at about 202. "I just don't eat fast food,

FEATURE STORY



Zac Taylor made a successful debut in the 2005 Spring Game, completing 20-of-27 passes for a Spring Game-record 357 yards and three touchdowns during the first half.

twice a day, like I used to. That's the biggest thing. I eat at Hewit a lot more."

The training table is located at the Hewit Center.

Taylor took every snap last season until late in the 10th game against Kansas State, when he was replaced by true freshman Harrison Beck after being knocked out. That game wasn't among his best, "by any means," he said. "But that was probably the game when I started thinking things slowed down, just the whole offense. That's kind of when things really started to click. So it took me a while.

"We had our moments, definitely, throughout our season. But I felt like everybody was really on the same page that game and things started feeling pretty good."

He didn't feel so good afterward, however. He was "kind of dizzy for a couple of days. Luckily we had a bye-week so we didn't practice too much; I got a couple of days off."

And besides, that wasn't nearly as bad as seeing teammates Steve

Octavien and Stewart Bradley go down with season-ending knee injuries. "All I have to deal with is a concussion for three days, so I'd kind of rather have that than go through what they went through," Taylor said.

Nevertheless, he went through plenty, displaying a mental and physical toughness that belies an easy-going personality. He was sacked three dozen times and knocked down countless others.

He had a "rough couple of days" following the Alamo Bowl game. His body ached from the season's beating. But "everybody's on the team is probably just kind of torn apart," he said.

The players eased into the off-season running and conditioning program under the direction of strength coach Dave Kennedy and his staff, who "didn't kill us the first day."

By the start of spring practice a year ago, Taylor had gotten to know his new teammates and was beginning to feel comfortable around them.

But "regardless of how much they make you feel accepted, there's still that bond you kind of have to create with people," he said.

"That kind of takes the whole season."

So he watched and learned and asserted himself as any quarterback has to. By the third week of spring he was first on the depth chart and the starter for the Red-White game.

The morning of the game he was so nervous "it's not even funny," he said. It was raining when he woke up, and he was "scared to death" he would be "throwing the ball all over the place."

He threw over the place, all right, completing 20-of-27 passes for 357 yards and three touchdowns with no interceptions during the first half, then watched the second half from the sideline.

"This year it will be totally different," he said. He was referring only to his comfort level. Presumably, he would take a comparable statistical performance in the Red-White game.

How Taylor will do is among many questions to be answered in 15 practices this spring. Some are much more significant than others. Here are a few to consider. (Class designations are in the fall).



Tight end Matt Herian missed the entire 2005 season.

Will Matt Herian Return To Form?

The senior tight end from Pierce, Neb., will attract considerable attention as he comes back from the broken leg suffered against Missouri in 2004. He was able to practice on a limited basis late last season, during bowl preparations. But it has been over a year since he's been full-go.

He'll also have a new position coach in Shawn Watson, who replaces Scott Downing. Watson knows what a healthy Herian means to the offense, having watched him as an assistant at Colorado. "I thought Matt Herian was one of the best tight ends in our league, if not the best," said Watson. "We had some pretty good guys at Colorado, but I felt like he was on the same level.

"He'll make a difference as a play-maker, create explosive plays."

Watson also is familiar with junior J.B. Phillips, the returning starter.

"The tight end in this offense is in the primary progression or he's the outlet, the check-down probably about 95 percent of the time. So the tight end has got to be a guy that throws some numbers up there, gets touches and con-

trol of the ball," Watson said.

A good spring for Herian would be very good for the offense.

Who Will Succeed Cory Ross At Running Back?

No one can ever replace the versatile Ross, whose enthusiasm and omnipresent smile will be missed almost as much as his many talents, catching the ball as well as running with it.

Sophomores Marlon Lucky, Cody Glenn and Leon Jackson as well as junior Brandon Jackson will have a head start on junior college transfer Kenny Wilson, who won't arrive until training camp.

The competition will be spirited in the spring as well as the fall, as it should be. Norvell was already anticipating that on the day after the Alamo Bowl game. "It's Nebraska," he said. "We want great competition at that position, and I think we will (have it)."



Leon Jackson is moving back to running back.

Will Leon Jackson Finally Find A Position?

Jackson, who got a late start in training camp as a freshman, began as a running back but quickly moved to safety. Early on, it appeared he might redshirt. He played on special teams, however, and by late in the season was practicing on the scout team as a wide receiver. Now he's a running back again.



Nebraska's rebuilt offensive line will be missing starting center Kurt Mann (50) in the spring.

WHAT WILL CHANGE IN THE OFFENSIVE LINE?

Nebraska ranked 96th in the nation in total offense and allowed 38 sacks. Improvement begins with the line, which will be without senior center Kurt Mann, who is coming off shoulder surgery.

As a result, Greg Austin, also a senior, will focus on center. Austin, who continues to battle a right knee problem, started the first 10 games at left guard last season before giving way to the departed Jared Helming. He was listed as Mann's back-up and has practiced at the position. But he's also left-handed, which will require some adjustment on the part of Taylor and the other quarterbacks.

Junior Brett Byford, a center and guard, is expected to miss the spring with a groin injury.

Sophomore Matt Slauson, who started twice at right tackle, will get a look at guard, and Andy Christensen, another sophomore, returns after missing last season with a shoulder injury. Christensen had worked his way to the top of the depth chart at guard during fall camp when the injury occurred.

Junior Chris Patrick and sophomore Lydon Murtha, who have five starts between them, will work at tackle, as will Victory Haines, a 6-foot-7, 288-pound junior college transfer.

Haines and wide receiver Tyrell Spain, also a junior college transfer, are the only members of the 2006 recruiting class who have enrolled in classes and will participate in spring practice. Grayshirt Jacob Hickman, who signed a letter-of-intent a year ago, also will begin practicing, at center.

Brock Pasteur, Craig Roark and Rodney Picou are coming off redshirts, while Jordan Picou and Newton

Lingenfelter are expected to miss the spring because of shoulder injuries.

In addition to Helming, Brandon Koch and Seppo Ewwaraye are gone.

WHERE WILL HARRISON BECK FIT IN?

Beck was the most publicized member of Nebraska's 2005 recruiting class and appeared to be redshirting until Taylor was knocked out of the Kansas State game. Even as a back-up, he'll attract a lot of attention during the spring. And he expects to challenge for the starting job.

"That's just me being a competitor," he said during



Harrison Beck saw limited action as a true freshman.

bowl preparation. "I think I'm starting to get a hold of the offense now, and with these extra bowl practices, all it can do is help me. Obviously, I'm going to work very hard during the off-season. We'll just see what happens."

The bowl practices were important "in building confidence," he said. "Football is all about

confidence. You can't play without confidence. If you're in there against (the No. 1 defense), and you're making throws and people are making catches, it obviously builds your confidence."

Competition is essential at every position. That's why Taylor was recruited a year ago.



The return of Steve Octavien gives NU additional depth at linebacker.

How Much Practice Time Will Be Devoted To A 3-4 Defensive Alignment?

Though defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove, who turned down an opportunity to coach the Minnesota Vikings' linebackers, has said he won't replace the 4-3 base alignment Nebraska has used since the early 1990s with a 3-4, the Cornhuskers apparently will spend time practicing in a 3-4 alignment as a "change-up" as well as to utilize an abundance of talented linebackers. The spring roster includes eight scholarship linebackers, plus Steve Allen, a transfer from Fresno City College, arrives in the fall. The linebacking is "one of the best situations I've ever had," Cosgrove told the Omaha World-Herald.

Corey McKeon heads the list after a break-out sophomore season in which he was credited with a team-high 98 tackles, including 22 for losses. Senior Stewart Bradley and juniors Steve Octavien and Bo Ruud all are coming off injuries. Ruud suffered a broken arm during a pre-Alamo Bowl practice, providing Lance Brandenburg, also a junior, an opportunity to start - and he made the most of it.

Le Kevin Smith and Titus Adams are gone from the defensive line, where seniors Ola Dagunduro and Barry Cryer and sophomore Ndamukong Suh are among those who must pick up the slack. Senior Adam Carriker, who considered declaring for the NFL draft, and Jay Moore are returning starters at end, and Barry Turner established himself as a pass-rusher as a true freshmen. But inexperience in the interior line is another reason to devote practice time to a four-linebacker alignment.

Redshirted freshman Nick Covey, is expected to miss the spring because of a shoulder injury.

Try Our Version of the 3-4 Defense Duty, Honor, Country



Middle linebacker Corey McKeon was NU's leader in tackles and possibly in interviews.

WILL COREY McKEON CONTINUE TO BE REPORTERS' GO-TO GUY?

The loquacious McKeon distinguished himself last season not only on the field but also in the interview room. Reporters could count on him for honesty unencumbered by clichés. In other words, he was always good for a quote or two, regardless of the subject or situation. He's not Broderick Thomas; there is only one "Sandman." But he has been as reliable as Russ Hochstein, who would always take the time to accommodate reporters in need of a comment. Unseating him would be difficult.

HOW MANY TIMES WILL REPORTERS ASK ABOUT TEXAS AND USC?

After the Cornhuskers needed Adam Ickes to get a hand on a field goal attempt as time elapsed to beat Pittsburgh, some reporters lamented: "What's going to happen when these guys play USC?" The 2003 and 2004 national champion Trojans weren't on Nebraska's schedule last season, of course. They will play host to Nebraska this season, on Sept. 16. But whenever the Cornhuskers faltered, some form of the question was posed, often with Texas included, too — Nebraska plays the 2005 national champion Longhorns at Memorial Stadium on Oct. 21. For some, those will be the only two games that matter in 2006.

Players and coaches won't be looking ahead, however, according to Taylor. "We won't focus on who we're going to play in the fall this spring," he said. "But it's always going to be there."

"Every day you work, you're thinking about playing Louisiana Tech, USC and Nicholls State. It's always in the back of your mind, but when we're out there at practice, we'll just be working on the basics, doing what we need to do to get ourselves better." The Cornhuskers open against Louisiana Tech and then play Nicholls State, also at home, before traveling to Los Angeles.

WHO WILL HANDLE THE PUNTING?

The departure of Sam Koch leaves a significant void at a critical position. Koch averaged 45.6 yards and was consistently the team's most valuable special-teams player. The spring roster lists two punters, both walk-ons, junior Tyler Kester and sophomore Dan Titchener. If one of them doesn't earn the job during the spring, Alex Henery might in the fall. Henery will walk on from Omaha Burke High School, where he led Class A in punting with a 41.4-yard average to earn all-state recognition.

CAN TIERRE GREEN ADJUST TO SAFETY?

Green, a junior, will be playing his

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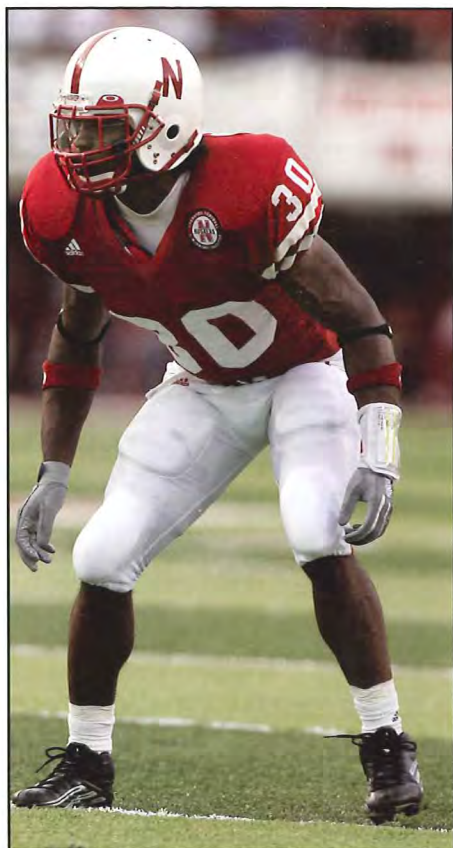
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Tierre Green is making his second position change.

third position in three springs. He began his college career as an I-back but moved to cornerback, where he started the first seven games last season. He'll try safety, where he played primarily on defense at Omaha Benson High School. He isn't averse to the move. Because of his high school experience, the position "kind of comes natural to me," he said.

Nebraska is in need of safeties, with the loss of three of the top four on the Alamo Bowl depth chart: Daniel Bullocks, Blake Tiedtke and Tyler Fisher. Only Andrew Shanle, a senior, returns.

Titus Brothers, whose persistence was significant in stopping the final play of the Alamo Bowl game, also will get a look at safety. Though starters Cortney Grixby and Zack Bowman return, the Cornhuskers are thin at corner as well. Help is on the way. The recruiting class includes five defensive backs.

WHO WILL STEP UP AS LEADERS?

Though captains aren't named until the fall, leaders emerge during

winter conditioning and spring practice. Taylor, Bradley, Austin, Carriker and Mann — even though he'll be held out — are among the most likely candidates to succeed Ross and Bullocks as captains, if coach Bill Callahan decides to put that responsibility on seniors again after allowing non-seniors to be captains his first season.

Taylor would seem to be a lock come fall, not only because of his personality but also because of his position. Quarterbacks have to be leaders. But being a captain "doesn't really cross my mind," said Taylor. "That's something the team decides. If they feel I'd be a good option, I'd be more than willing to take it. But there are plenty of seniors on this team who are

more than fitted on that role."

WILL THE SPRING GAME BE A SELLOUT?

Just as it has set the standard for consecutive home sellouts, Nebraska has done so with Spring Game attendance. The 2004 Red-White game attracted 61,417, a record that held for 12 months. The 2005 Red-White game attracted 63,416. That record won't be broken this spring. Because of construction, the North Stadium seating won't be available, which means capacity will be only 57,000. However, the game could be a sellout. Fans are being encouraged to purchase tickets in advance. ■

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2006 SPRING ROSTER

Source: Huskers.com

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown (school)						
7	Adams, Jordan	QB	6-3	200	Jr.	Santee, Calif. (Grossmont, Calif., College)	33	Miller, Grant	FB	6-0	225	Sr. Peabody, Mass. (Veterans)
93	Alegria, Jordan	PK	6-1	210	RFr.	North Platte, Neb.	58	Moore, Dontrell	LB	6-2	230	Sr. Thibodaux, La. (Coffeyville, Kan., CC)
65	Austin, Greg	OL	6-1	290	Sr.	Cypress, Texas (Cy-Fairbanks)	44	Moore, Jay	DE	6-4	270	Sr. Elkhorn, Neb.
3	Beck, Harrison	QB	6-2	210	So.	Clearwater, Fla. (Countryside)	81	Mueller, Josh	TE	6-5	265	Jr. Columbus, Neb. (Lakeview)
52	Benzel, Bryan	LS	6-2	270	RFr.	Alliance, Neb.	84	Mulkey, Grant	WR	5-11	180	Sr. Arlington, Texas
48	Blankenship, Adam	DE	6-2	245	So.	Tulsa, Okla. (Union)	76	Murtha, Lydon	OL	6-7	315	So. Hutchinson, Minn.
1	Bowman, Zackary	CB	6-2	190	Sr.	Anchorage, Alaska (Bartlett/ N.M. Military Institute)	83	Nunn, Terrence	WR	6-0	185	Jr. Houston, Texas (Cypress Falls)
34	Bradley, Stewart	LB	6-4	240	Sr.	Salt Lake City, Utah (Highland)	33	O'Hanlon, Matt	SS	5-11	200	So. Bellevue, Neb. (Bellevue East)
40	Brandenburgh, Lance	LB	6-1	230	Jr.	Overland Park, Kan. (Aquinas)	82	O'Leary, T.J.	LS	6-2	260	So. Omaha, Neb. (Millard North/ New Mexico State)
23	Brooks, Chris	WR	6-2	195	So.	St. Louis, Mo. (Hazelwood E.)	52	O'Shea, Mark	LB	5-11	225	Sr. Dallas, Texas (Jesuit Prep)
21	Brothers, Titus	SS	5-11	190	Jr.	San Antonio, Texas (Judson)	15	Octavien, Steve	LB	6-0	235	Jr. Naples, Fla. (Lely/ William R. Harper, III., College)
59	Byford, Brett	OL	6-3	305	Jr.	Hartselle, Ala.	45	Otto, Will	FB	5-11	240	Sr. Fullerton, Calif. (Troy/ Fullerton College)
82	Cammack, Wes	WR	5-11	180	RFr.	DeWitt, Neb. (Tri County)	78	Pasteur, Brock	OL	6-6	290	Jr. Orlando, Fla. (University/ Mesabi Range, Minn., CC)
90	Carriker, Adam	DE	6-6	280	Sr.	Kennewick, Wash. (Kennewick)	54	Patrick, Chris	OL	6-4	285	Jr. Ithaca, Mich.
62	Christensen, Andy	OL	6-3	300	So.	Bennington, Neb.	17	Peterson, Todd	WR	6-4	205	So. Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
29	Congdon, Jordan	PK	5-11	180	So.	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)	85	Phillips, J.B.	TE	6-3	255	Jr. Colleyville, Texas (Heritage)
45	Covey, Nick	LB	6-2	225	RFr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Mount. Ridge)	68	Picou, Jordan	OL	6-2	320	Jr. Rialto, Calif. (Eisenhower/ Mt. San Antonio, Calif., CC)
94	Cryer, Barry	DL	6-2	275	Sr.	Marrero, La. (John Ehret/ Dodge City, Kan., CC)	72	Picou, Rodney	OL	6-4	300	RFr. Moreno Valley, Calif. (Canyon Springs)
54	Dagunduro, Ola	DL	6-2	290	Sr.	Inglewood, Calif. (Compton, Calif., CC)	98	Potter, Zach	DE	6-7	270	So. Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
15	Davis, Beau	QB	6-4	185	So.	Venice, Calif.	86	Poulosky, Andy	DE	6-2	240	Jr. Ponca, Neb.
38	Dillard, Phillip	LB	6-2	250	So.	Tulsa, Okla. (Jenks)	85	Rice, Thomas	DE	6-1	235	Jr. Lincoln, Neb. (East)
46	Eisenhart, Ben	SS	5-11	200	Jr.	Culbertson, Neb.	24	Rigoni, Brandon	SS	5-6	180	Sr. Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
26	Erickson, Dan	WR	6-0	195	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Papio-LaVista)	63	Roark, Craig	OL	6-2	300	RFr. Ada, Okla.
47	Farino, Paul	FB	6-0	240	RFr.	East Meadow, N.Y. (Kellenberg)	51	Ruud, Bo	LB	6-3	230	Jr. Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
28	Fluellen, Isaiah	WR	6-0	185	Sr.	Ramstein, Germany (Ramstein American)	37	Sampogna, Mike	IB	5-10	200	So. Chicago, Ill. (Mt. Carmel)
57	Fredinburg, Conan	OL	6-7	310	RFr.	Sioux Falls, S.D. (Roosevelt)	48	Sand, Andy	TE	6-2	225	Jr. Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
8	Ganz, Joe	QB	6-1	200	So.	Palos Heights, Ill. (Stagg)	42	Senske, Matt	FB	6-3	230	Jr. Bellevue, Neb. (Bellevue East)
18	Gingery, Travis	CB	5-10	180	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (East)	8	Shanle, Andrew	FS	6-1	205	Sr. St. Edward, Neb.
34	Glenn, Cody	IB	6-0	230	So.	Rusk, Texas (Rusk)	88	Sievers, Clayton	TE	6-4	240	So. Elkhorn, Neb.
30	Green, Tierre	SS	6-1	200	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Benson)	70	Slauson, Matt	OL	6-5	340	So. Colorado Springs, Colo. (Air Force Prep)
2	Grixby, Cortney	CB	5-9	165	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	88	Spain, Tyrell	WR	6-3	190	Jr. San Diego, Calif. (Hoover/ Mesa, Ariz., College)
	Haines, Victory	OL	6-7	285	Jr.	Logan, Utah (Snow, Utah, College)	43	Steinkuhler, Ty	DE	6-3	260	So. Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
7	Hardy, Frantz	WR	6-0	175	Jr.	Miami, Fla. (Washington/ Butler County, Kan., CC)	77	Suh, Ndamukong	DL	6-4	300	So. Portland, Ore. (Grant)
35	Harvey, David	TE	6-3	235	RFr.	La Plata, Md. (McDonough)	84	Sullivan, Tony	DE	6-3	240	Jr. Wahoo, Neb. (Neumann)
11	Herian, Matt	TE	6-5	240	Sr.	Pierce, Neb.	87	Swift, Nate	WR	6-2	195	So. Hutchinson, Minn.
86	Hill, Sean	TE	6-3	255	Jr.	Lisle, Ill. (Naperville North)	13	Taylor, Zac	QB	6-2	210	Sr. Norman, Okla./ (Butler County, Kan., CC)
61	Huff, Mike	OL	6-4	300	So.	Ralston, Neb.	89	Teafatiller, Hunter	TE	6-3	202	So. Kingsburg, Calif. (San Joaquin)
32	Jackson, Brandon	IB	5-11	205	Jr.	Horn Lake, Miss.	97	Titchener, Dan	P	6-0	195	So. Cheyenne, Wyo. (East)
23	Jackson, Leon	IB	6-2	210	So.	Pasco, Wash.	41	Todd, Dane	FB	5-10	235	Sr. Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
47	Kadavy, Andy	LB	5-11	225	Sr.	Seward, Neb.	10	Tomerlin, Justin	DE	6-6	265	So. San Clemente, Calif. (Butler County, Kan., CC)
92	Kelly, Lane	LS	6-4	270	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)	99	Turner, Barry	DL	6-3	245	So. Antioch, Tenn. (Brentwood Academy)
19	Kester, Tyler	P	6-1	200	Jr.	Clearwater, Neb.	59	Voges, Brian	LB	6-3	225	Jr. Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest/ Phoenix JC)
36	Lawson, Thomas	FB	6-0	225	So.	Parker, Colo. (Ponderosa)	98	Wesch, Jake	PK	6-1	190	So. North Bend, Neb.
35	LeFlore, Chris	CB	5-10	210	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	28	Wilson, Bryan	CB	6-2	190	Jr. Granada Hills, Calif. (Pierce, Calif., College)
74	Lingenfelter, Newton	OL	6-5	280	Sr.	Plainview, Neb.	53	Wortman, Tyler	LB	6-3	220	So. Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
20	Lucky, Marlon	IB	6-0	210	So.	North Hollywood, Calif.						
91	Lueshen, Eric	PK	6-2	190	Jr.	Pierce, Neb.						
89	Luhrs, Kevin	DE	6-1	255	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)						
50	Mann, Kurt	OL	6-4	290	Sr.	Grand Island, Neb.						
55	McBride, Nathan	LS	6-1	205	RFr.	Scottsdale, Ariz. (Chaparral)						
13	McKeon, Corey	LB	6-1	225	Jr.	Naperville, Ill. (North)						

Quarterback High Priority

*After not signing
a quarterback in
2006 class, NU
could take two*

By Doug Horwich

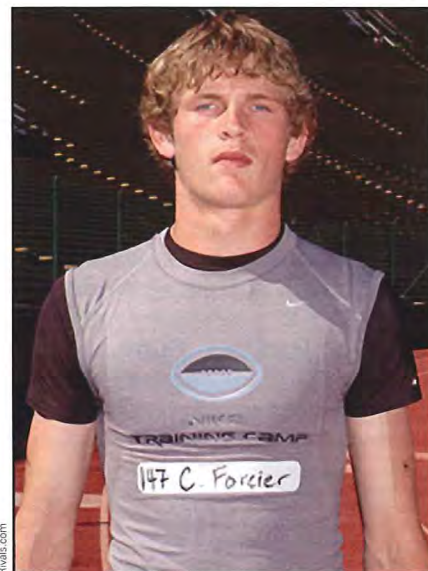
The Husker staff planned to take one quarterback in the 2006 recruiting class but came away empty-handed after a late-season decommitment from Grandview, Mo., prospect Josh Freeman.

As a result, quarterback has become one of the most urgent positional needs in Nebraska's 2007 recruiting class, and when the dust settles, it's entirely likely that the Huskers will end up with two quarterbacks in the class.

Thus far, the current Nebraska coaching staff has had little difficulty in attracting the attention of the nation's top passing quarterbacks. The NFL pedigree of coach Bill Callahan and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Jay Norvell has proved to be an easy sell to the nation's elite quarterbacks.

Adding to Nebraska's quarterback coaching pedigree is the West Coast Offense utilized by the Huskers, which is also being used in one form or another by a significant percentage of the NFL's 32 teams.

The elite quarterback camp that the Husker staff plays host to each summer is also an outstanding way to attract the attention of top prospects



Two of the nation's top quarterback prospects are Ryan Mallett (left) of Texarkana, Texas, and Chris Forcier of San Diego, Calif.

from coast to coast.

Given these factors, the Huskers are likely to end up with at least one top-10 national quarterback prospect in this recruiting class.

Perhaps topping Nebraska's list is a player that teams around the country are pursuing and who was also a top performer at last year's elite quarterback camp in Lincoln — Texarkana, Texas, standout Ryan Mallett (6-foot-6, 230 pounds, 4.7-second 40-yard dash).

Mallett is being recruited by a large number of top programs around the nation, and certainly has some interest in the Husker program, but his focus right now is on Michigan and Texas, with Nebraska more or less on the outside looking in. Unless Mallett's plans change in the near future, the Husker staff will have to turn their attention elsewhere.

Another quarterback who is being heavily recruited by the Nebraska staff hails from a program that has sent two players to Lincoln over the past two recruiting seasons — St. Augustine High School in San Diego, Calif. The Huskers signed St. Augustine place-kicker Jordan Congdon in their 2005 recruiting class as well as wide receiver Menelik Holt in 2006. This year, the school features one of the top quarterback prospects in the nation in Chris Forcier (6-3, 185, 4.5).

Forcier is a mobile quarterback with speed who can hurt defenses with both his arm and his legs. His offer list of schools from coast to coast currently includes UCLA, Nebraska, Ole Miss, Oregon, Mississippi State, San Diego State and Texas A&M.

Despite the attractiveness of playing for the home-state UCLA Bruins,

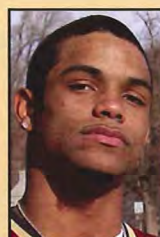
RECRUITING NOTES

Omahan Leads State Prospects

By Rick Shaw

Here's an early look at the state of Nebraska's top five high school football prospects for the class of 2007.

● **1. Niles Paul, 6-foot-1, 200 pounds, wide receiver/safety, Omaha North** — Paul is considered by most to be the top prep prospect in Nebraska heading into the 2006 season. Regarded as one of the top 100 high school prospects in the country by Rivals.com, Paul ended the recruiting process early by giving his pledge to Nebraska coaches in early January. The nephew of former Husker and current Green Bay Packer running back Ahman Green, Paul chose Nebraska over an offer from Iowa State and heavy recruiting interest from Notre Dame; Michigan, Iowa, Florida State and LSU.



Niles Paul

● **2. Harland Gunn, 6-3, 300, offensive lineman, Omaha Central** — Gunn saw his recruiting stock soar in February, when Miami extended him a scholarship offer. Nebraska, Iowa State, Kansas and Kansas State quickly followed suit, but Gunn decided to pull the trigger after a visit to Miami in early March.

"I'm a Hurricane, and I'm real excited about it," Gunn told HuskersIllustrated.com. "Once they offered, I knew that's where I wanted to be."

● **3. Phillip Bates, 6-2, 195, athlete, Omaha North** — The son of former Husker fullback Phil Bates Sr., Bates passed for more than 1,200 yards as a junior and scored 21 touchdowns. Bates already has scholarship offers in hand from both Nebraska and Iowa State, while Purdue, Oklahoma, Miami and Arizona State are also giving chase. With outstanding speed (4.48-second 40-yard dash) and athleticism (30-inch vertical leap), Bates could play a number of positions at the college level. However, it's at quarterback where he hopes to make his mark.

● **4. Kyle Dooley, 6-2, 280, offensive lineman, Papillion-La Vista** — Dooley, named a first-team all-state offensive lineman by the Omaha World-Herald in 2005, should get his share of Division I looks over the next several months. Iowa State, Kansas State and Nebraska — already are in frequent contact and may be waiting to see him at summer camp before extending scholarship offers.

"Dennis Wagner (Nebraska assistant) said Kyle is without a doubt the top lineman they've seen on film for next year in the state of Nebraska," Papillion-La Vista coach Gene Suhr said. "He said they want him to come to their camp, and that's probably when they'll make a decision on an offer."

● **5. Zane Abner, 6-4, 180, wide receiver/safety, Atkinson West Holt** — The top sleeper prospect in the state, Abner has the size and speed (4.56) to be a big-time receiver or defensive back in college. Abner dominated Nebraska Class C football in 2005, tallying nine interceptions in eight games to go along with 33 catches for 623 yards and 12 touchdowns. Nebraska already has taken notice of Abner's abilities and hopes to lure him to their camp this summer for further evaluation. ■

Forcier has definitely taken notice of the Husker program, and the fact that he has two good friends playing for Nebraska is a strong factor in the Huskers' favor.

"I am very excited about Nebraska," Forcier said. "I have two former teammates at Nebraska. Menelik Holt just committed this year, and he was my receiver. Jordan Congdon, a freshman all-American kicker, came from my school. I am very excited about Nebraska football. I think they are back on track to where they were a few years ago.

"It is a big football state; everyone watches their football games for every home game. It is a school that has a lot of tradition. It is definitely one that I am considering."

Forcier also has taken notice of the Huskers' West Coast Offense. "Callahan has the type of offense that I like — a throwing offense. I think they have a lot of good young players that they are recruiting. They have had good recruiting classes for the future.

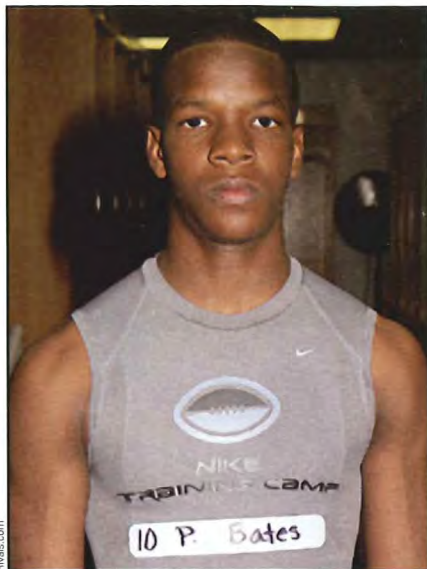
"(The West Coast offense) is why I like Nebraska," he said. "They changed their offense. It is like the NFL West Coast offense. They like to pass more, and for a quarterback like me, it stands out. To be able to get to the next level, you have to go somewhere where they throw the ball and not just run it.

"I'm just very excited about the offer, honestly. Menelik has been talking to me and how much they like me. I am definitely considering them as a top school of my choice."

The battle for Forcier could ultimately be a Huskers vs. Bruins battle. Forcier potentially may make a decision before the start of his senior season, and Nebraska is very much in consideration.

Another quarterback who holds a Nebraska offer is Phillip Bates (6-2, 195, 4.) from Omaha North High School. Bates is a versatile athlete with the athleticism to play a number of positions on both offense and defense, but his preference is to play quarterback. His offer list currently includes Nebraska and Iowa State, but more offers are likely to follow in the near future.

Despite the fact that his close friend and teammate Niles Paul made an early commitment to the Huskers,



Omaha North's versatile Phillip Bates prefers to play quarterback.

Bates plans to take his time and attend a handful of summer camps in the coming months.

"I'd say there's a pretty high chance that we'll play together," Bates said about his friend and teammate. "As for my own timetable, there's a chance I could decide early, and there's a chance I could wait it out for

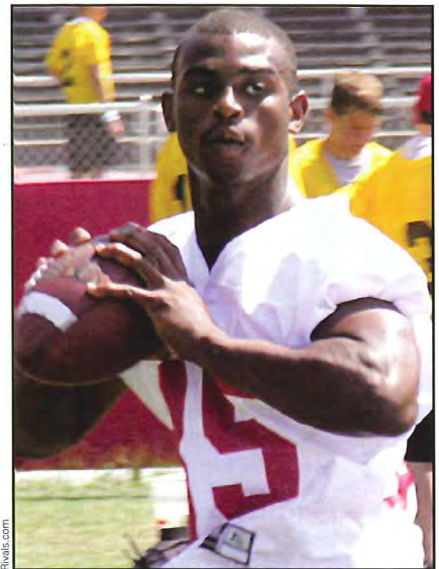
a while. I'll have to talk things over some more with my family.

"I'm going to a one-day camp at Arizona State, and I'm going to camp at Nebraska, Iowa, the Norman (Okla.) NIKE (Football Training) camp, and an Elite 11 camp," Bates said. "Me and my dad are still planning them all out, but those are the ones I'm for sure going to."

One of the most important factors for Bates and his family throughout the recruiting process is that Phillip is recruited strictly as a quarterback and not as an athlete — a common scenario for quarterbacks with his athleticism and versatility. "We like Nebraska no doubt," Bates Sr. said. "but Phil wants to play quarterback, and that's the main thing we want to make sure of wherever he goes."

Bates is indeed being recruited by the Huskers as a quarterback prospect, and certainly the Nebraska coaching staff would love to get him to attend their elite quarterbacks camp this summer to further evaluate his skills at the position up close and in person.

Another athletic quarterback being recruited by the Huskers is LaTravis



LaTravis Washington of Bradenton, Fla., has NU high on his list.

Washington (6-3, 210, 4.55) from Bayshore High School in Bradenton, Fla. Washington is a cousin of former NU cornerback Fabian Washington and currently has the Huskers at the top of his favorites list. ■

For more daily recruiting information, visit huskersillustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.

HUSKER FANS

Tickets and hotel packages are available for all Husker games.

September 16 at U.S.C.

October 21 Texas (home)

HOME GAMES

9-2 Louisiana
9-9 Nichols St.
9-23 Troy
9-30 Kansas
10-21 Texas
11-4 Missouri
11-24 C.U.

AWAY GAMES

9-16 USC
10-7 Iowa St.
10-14 Kansas St.
10-28 Oklahoma St.
11-11 Texas A&M

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The Best of Times

He was close to the 3-point line when he released the ball. But he was definitely behind it. "I made sure I knew where that line was because I knew we needed a 3," Keith Moody said.

Fifteen years have passed since that night in March of 1991. But the image of the shot remains vivid, preserved as it is on videotape. Moody's mom has a copy. And when he went home for Christmas, he put it in the VCR, watched it again and "thought about those times," he said.

"Those times" are his senior season at Nebraska. They are the best of times, not only for him as a basketball player but also for the Cornhuskers, who have never been more successful.

Coach Danny Nee's fifth team won a school-record 26 games and advanced to the NCAA Tournament for only the second time in the program's history — as a No. 3 seed.

Xavier upset the Cornhuskers in Minneapolis, 89-84. But the years have washed away the dust of disappointment, leaving clean and pleasant memories of "those times."

The particulars are readily accessible. Moody's 3-point shot, his first in 10 games, came with 6 seconds remaining in regulation, in a game against Oklahoma in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament at Kemper Arena in Kansas City. It tied the score at 100.

Nebraska had trailed 90-79 with 3:07 remaining. And if the Sooners' Terry Evans had made a free throw with 11.9 seconds remaining, Moody's shot would have been one point short.

But Evans, who rarely missed, did. And the next thing Moody knew, he was racing up the court with the ball, "looking for 'Pike' and Chris Creswell in the corners," he said.

"Pike," Eric Piatkowski, and Creswell, 3-point shooters, were covered, said Moody, and "I had some room to put it up. Once it left my hand, I was like, 'Please, please, please.'"

The shot went in. The game went into overtime. And the Cornhuskers won, 117-113, even though Rich King, Tony Farmer, Beau Reid and Dapreis Owens had fouled out in regulation.

Nebraska was 5-for-5 from the field during the overtime.

"I knew it was over because we had all the momentum," Moody said.

The victory was the Cornhuskers' third against Oklahoma that season. They won the first at Norman 111-99 and the second in Lincoln 105-93. In all, they scored 100 or more points seven times and averaged 88 points per game. Five players averaged double-figure scoring, led by King's 15.5.

King would be a first-round NBA draft pick after that season. Piatkowski would be a first-round draft pick three seasons later. And Farmer also would play in the NBA.

Moody was among 10 members of the 1990-91 team who returned to Nebraska for a reunion on the weekend the Cornhuskers played Texas Tech. King, Piatkowski, Reid, Creswell, Bruce Chubick, J.F. Hoffman, Kelly Lively, Jose Ramos and Derek Lodwig joined Moody to reminisce.



Eric Piatkowski (52), Rich King (25), Dapreis Owens (00) and Clifford Scales battle Iowa State during the 1990-91 season.

King came from Seattle, Creswell from San Francisco and Ramos from Coral Gables, Fla.

"It feels like time has not passed at all, especially walking out there," Moody said after the players, and assistant coach Gary Borgen, were introduced at halftime of the Texas Tech game.

"Everybody looks great. I think all of us try and keep in some type of shape."

Moody, a project manager for a cable-billing company in Omaha, plays basketball whenever he can. A cut under his right eye was evidence. "I got an elbow yesterday, playing over lunch," he said.

Nebraska was picked last in the Big Eight in 1990-91, based on a 10-18 finish the previous season. But after losing to Murray State in the final game of the San Juan Shootout, the Cornhuskers won 14 games in a row, a school-record streak that began with a 71-69 victory against No. 5 Michigan State.

Reid hit a 24-foot shot from the right side with 2 seconds remaining, much to the delight of a Devaney Sports Center crowd of 14,561, a record for a home-opener.

The shots by Reid and Moody provide symmetry to the 26-8 season. Three games preceded Reid's shot and three games followed Moody's. "You never think you're going to be in that situation," said Moody. "Whenever I see a buzzer-beater, I always think about that OU shot.

"I see guys jumping up and down on the court. I know that feeling." ■

1990-91 Roster

No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
00	Dapreis Owens	6-8	230	Jr.
4	Tony Farmer	6-9	225	Jr.
10	Jose Ramos	6-2	190	Jr.
11	Keith Moody	5-11	190	Sr.
14	J.F. Hoffman	6-1	185	Jr.
20	Mario McIntosh	6-0	160	Fr.
21	Carl Hayes	6-8	195	Jr.
23	Clifford Scales	6-2	170	Sr.
24	Chris Creswell	6-4	195	Jr.
25	Rich King	7-2	260	Sr.
33	Jamie Cole	6-3	180	So.
34	Kelly Lively	7-0	215	Sr.
40	Beau Reid	6-8	220	Sr.
41	Bruce Chubick	6-7	215	Fr.
45	Derek Lodwig	6-1	185	So.
52	Eric Piatkowski	6-6	200	Fr.

Head coach: Danny Nee

Assistants: Gary Borgen, Lynn Mitchem, Jeff Smith

Graduate assistant: Jeff Reinert

Jason Dourisseau goes inside versus Kansas State.



Scott Braun

Men's Results

Overall: 18-12/Big 12: 7-9

- Nov. 18 *Longwood, W 80-65
- Nov. 19 *Yale, W 73-64
- Nov. 20 *Louisiana Tech, W 59-56
- Nov. 27 SE Missouri State, W 69-54
- Nov. 30 Marquette, W 84-74
- Dec. 3 Ala.-Birmingham, L 73-72
- Dec. 8 South Dakota State, W 76-67
- Dec. 11 @Creighton, L 70-44
- Dec. 17 Chicago State, W 76-65
- Dec. 19 North Carolina A&T, W 107-57
- Dec. 21 Alabama A&M, W 67-60
- Dec. 31 **Florida State, L 74-60
- Jan. 3 Northern Colorado, W 60-50
- Jan. 7 Oklahoma, W 59-58
- Jan. 11 @Kansas State, W 57-42
- Jan. 17 Iowa State, L 88-75
- Jan. 21 @Kansas, L 96-54
- Jan. 25 @Colorado, L 81-59
- Jan. 28 Missouri, W 65-52
- Jan. 31 @Oklahoma State, W 59-57
- Feb. 4 Baylor, W 60-45
- Feb. 8 Kansas, L 69-48
- Feb. 11 @Texas, L 78-59
- Feb. 15 @Iowa State, W 73-63
- Feb. 18 Texas Tech, L 70-64
- Feb. 22 Colorado, W 93-77
- Feb. 25 @Texas A&M, L 66-55
- March 1 Kansas State, L 66-64
- March 5 @Missouri, L 64-63
- March 9 ***Missouri, W 71-64
- March 10 ***Oklahoma
- *John Thompson Classic, Lincoln, Neb.
- **Orange Bowl Classic, Miami, Fla.
- ***Big 12 Tournament, Dallas, Texas

Women's Results

Overall: 17-12/Big 12: 8-8

- Nov. 19 South Dakota State, L 68-49
- Nov. 21 Creighton, W 84-50
- Nov. 25 *LSU, L 74-55
- Nov. 27 *TAMU-Corp. Christi, W 76-64
- Dec. 3 @Minnesota, L 78-70
- Dec. 7 Texas Southern, W 93-68
- Dec. 10 @Northwestern, W 80-50
- Dec. 17 @Michigan, W 69-49
- Dec. 20 Texas State, W 96-47
- Dec. 29 Grambling State, W 69-40
- Dec. 31 Northern Arizona, W 70-56
- Jan. 4 @Colorado, W 80-62
- Jan. 7 Kansas, W 73-61
- Jan. 11 Missouri, L 64-58
- Jan. 14 @Iowa State, L 79-57
- Jan. 18 Texas, L 70-62
- Jan. 21 @Texas Tech, L 61-59
- Jan. 28 Colorado, W 70-54
- Feb. 1 Iowa State, W 54-42
- Feb. 4 @Kansas State, L 71-64
- Feb. 8 @Baylor, L 91-69
- Feb. 11 Texas A&M, L 69-50
- Feb. 15 @Kansas, W 60-57
- Feb. 18 Kansas State, W 64-62 (ot)
- Feb. 21 Oklahoma State, W 81-56
- Feb. 26 @Oklahoma, L 73-45
- March 1 @Missouri, W 75-62
- March 7 **Colorado, W 67-59
- March 8 **Texas A&M, L 73-64
- *Miami Thanksgiving Classic, Miami, Fla.
- **Big 12 Tournament, Dallas, Texas

Scott Braun



Kiera Hardy (front) celebrates with teammates.

BASKETBALL NOTES

SENIOR NIGHT, MEN

The final regular-season home game was bittersweet, a 66-64 loss against Kansas State. "It's tough," sophomore Aleks Maric said afterward. "I've been here for two years and these guys are like brothers to me. It's hard to send them out on a loss. But I told them after the game I love them all."

The seniors to whom he referred, all of them from Nebraska, were: Wes Wilkinson (Grand Island), Jason Dourisseau (Omaha), Bronsen Schliep (Fairfield) and Tony Wilbrand (Alliance). They were introduced in an emotional pre-game ceremony, and coach Barry Collier started all four, along with junior Charles Richardson. The start was the first of Wilbrand's career.

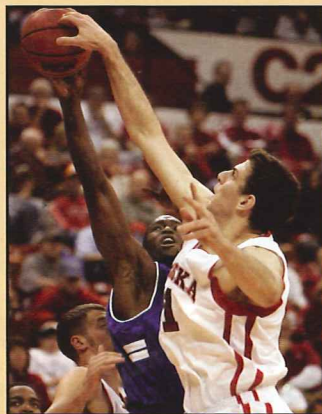
Maric did his part to send them out with a victory, scoring 16 points and grabbing 12 rebounds, his 10th double-double of the season. But it wasn't enough. Nebraska trailed 65-58 with 11 seconds remaining, but 3-point shots by Marcus Walker and Jamel White cut the lead to one.

Kansas State's Cartier Martin hit the second of two free throws with 2.2 seconds remaining for the final margin, preserved when a desperation 3-point shot by White was blocked.

BIG GAME FOR BIG AL

Maric came up big in the Cornhuskers' 73-63 victory at Iowa State, scoring 37 points and pulling down 16 rebounds. He went into the game averaging 9.1 points. He went 13-of-15 from the field and 11-of-15 from the free throw line. The 37 points were the fifth-most in school history.

Eric Piatkowski	42 vs. Oklahoma, 1994
Rich King	40 vs. No. Illinois, 1991
Jerry Fort	40 vs. Missouri, 1975
Tom Russell	38 vs. Kansas, 1962
Aleks Maric	37 vs. Iowa State, 2006
Tyrone Lue	36 vs. Virginia, 1997
W.W. Walsh	36 vs. Crete, 1906-07
Eric Piatkowski	35 vs. Texas, 1993
Dave Hoppen	35 vs. So. Colorado, 1984
Herschell Turner	35 vs. Missouri, 1959



Aleks Maric

DEEE-FENSE

Richard Roby, one of the leading scorers in the Big 12, scored 30 to lead Colorado to an 81-59 victory against the Cornhuskers at Boulder. When Colorado came to Lincoln for a rematch, Dourisseau was determined to keep Roby from another scoring outburst.

"I didn't care if I scored one point. I just wanted to try to contain him," Dourisseau said after limiting Roby to seven points, on 2-of-11 shooting from the field, in a 93-77 Cornhusker victory.

Dourisseau also contributed 13 points and seven rebounds.

"The last couple of days at practice Jason has really had that fire in his eyes," Wilkinson said. "That was his goal, to shut down Roby. That was like his main purpose on the court."

"He took it personal. He was going to try to lock down Roby."

SENIOR NIGHT, WOMEN

Coach Connie Yori's Husker women celebrated Senior Night with an 81-56 victory over hapless Oklahoma State before a crowd of 3,605 at the Devaney Sports Center.

LaToya Howell (Chicago), one of three seniors playing her final regular-season home game, tied a career high with 10 assists. The other seniors were Elena Diaz (Medellin, Colombia) and Ivana Drmanac (Belgrade, Serbia & Montenegro). Diaz came off the bench to score 11 points and tie a career high with nine rebounds. Junior Jessica Gerhart led the Huskers with 16 points, in 15 minutes.

The game took only 1 hour and 39 minutes and Nebraska had only four turnovers.

Jelena Spiric (Belgrade, Serbia & Montenegro) also was a senior but missed the season following knee surgery and decid-

ed to return, even though she could have played overseas. Spiric, a biochemistry major, will graduate in May.

ALL-CONFERENCE

For the second season in a row, the Huskers' Kiera Hardy was named to the All-Big 12 first team. During the regular season, the 5-foot-6 junior guard ranked among the conference leaders in scoring, assists, steals and 3-point shots per game. Hardy shattered Nebraska's single-season record for 3-point shots and is already the school career leader with another season remaining.



Kiera Hardy

Sabrina Brooks held the previous single-season record, with 47 during the 1987-88 season. DeForge, the only other Husker to earn back-to-back, first-team All-Big 12 recognition (1997, 1998), held the previous career record for 3-point shots with 155.

Hardy finished the regular season earning Big 12 player-of-the-week honors by scoring 28 points, on 11-of-16 field goal shooting in a 75-62 upset victory at Missouri. She was the conference player of the week two other times and moved into Nebraska's career-scoring top 10.

Karen Jennings (1990-93)	2,405 points
Maurice Ivy (1985-88)	2,131
Amy Stephens (1986-89)	1,976
Nicole Kubik (1997-2000)	1,867
Anna DeForge (1995-98)	1,859
Debra Powell (1982-85)	1,843
Kathy Hagerstrom (1980-83)	1,778
Angie Miller (1984-87)	1,541
Diane DeVigna (1979-80)	1,433
Kiera Hardy (2004-06)	1,312*

(*does not include post-season)

Kelsey Griffin received all-conference honorable mention and was named to the Big 12 all-rookie team. The freshman from Eagle River, Alaska, led the team in rebounding and ranked second in scoring going into post-season play. Her most productive

games of the season included 31 points and 14 rebounds against Texas A&M-Corpus Christi and 28 points and 12 rebounds at Kansas State.

ACADEMICS

Three Cornhusker men and two women earned first-team Academic All-Big 12 honors: Wilbrand, Dourisseau, Schliep, Jessica Gerhart and Sarah White.

Wilbrand and Dourisseau were first-team selections for a third consecutive season, something only five other Cornhuskers have accomplished: John Turek (2003-05), Andy Markowski (1997-99), Bruce Chubick (1992-94), John Matzke (1984-86) and Jack Moore (1980-82).

Schliep, a two-time selection, was the only one of 14 on the men's team with a perfect 4.0 cumulative grade-point average. He is majoring in business administration.

Gerhart, a junior from Fenton, Iowa, had a 3.5 GPA with a nutrition & dietetics major. White, a sophomore from Topeka, Kan., has a 3.22 GPA in elementary education.

Danielle Page, a sophomore from Monument, Colo., earned second-team honors.

BRIEFLY

● Husker women's recruit Yvonne Turner, from Bellevue (Neb.) East High School, was among 20 seniors picked to play in the WBCA High School All-America Game in Boston on April 1.

● Small forward Kris Douse, who made an oral commitment to sign a letter of intent with Nebraska in the 2007 recruiting class, has his own Web site, www.krisdouse.com. The 6-7 Douse, from Toronto, Canada, plays at the IMG Basketball Academy in Bradenton, Fla. ■

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

So Proud

***Stolen-base
record holder
enjoying NU's
current success***

By Mike Babcock

Immediately after the Nebraska baseball team wrapped up its first Big 12 Tournament title by defeating Baylor 4-3 in late May of 1999, Scott Hooper was at his computer, typing a congratulatory note. Paraphrased, it said: "From an ex-Husker, I just want to tell you how proud I am."

Hooper signed the note, then drove to campus, to Buck Beltzer Field, and tacked the note to the door of the Baumann Building, where it would greet the Cornhuskers on their return from Oklahoma City.

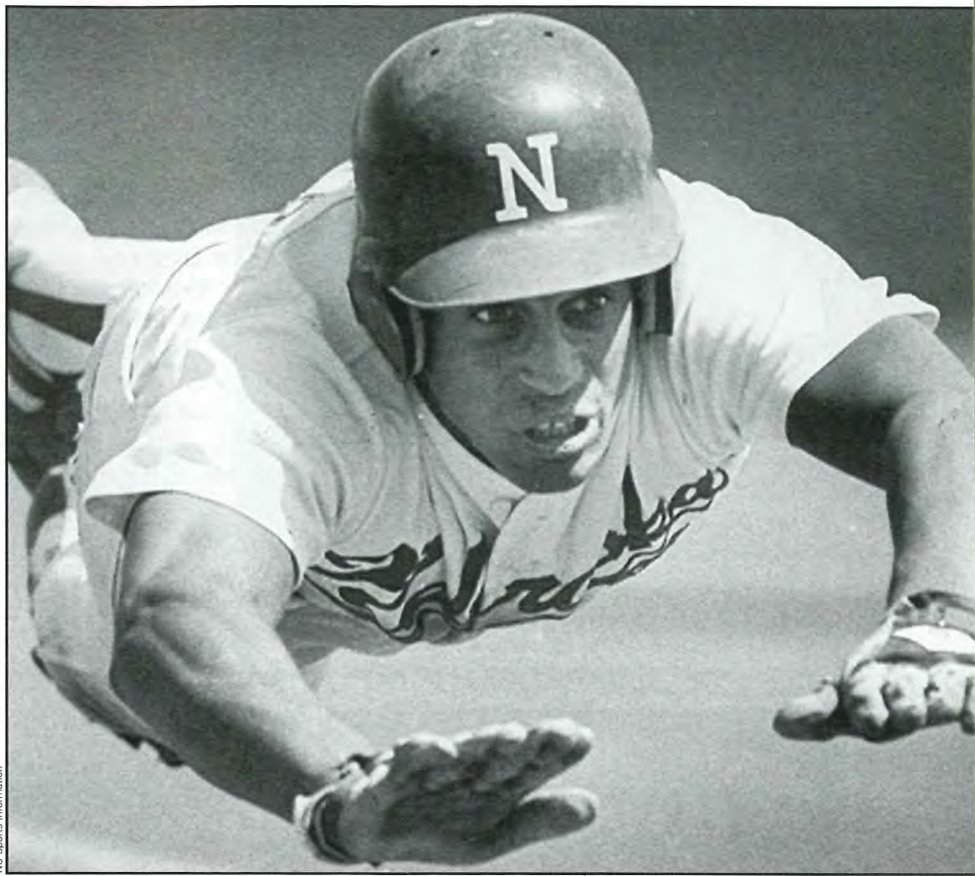
As "hokey" as that might sound, "I was just so stoked for them," said Hooper.

He remembered how it was for him as a player and then an assistant coach, arriving back in Lincoln in the early-morning hours after a long bus ride, made longer by the disappointment of not winning. Back then, Oklahoma State dominated the Big Eight, annually winning the tournament.

The Cowboys, "in their heyday, were nails," Hooper said. "They were flat-out good."

"We had some darn good teams. We just couldn't get over the hump with those Oklahoma schools (playing) in Oklahoma City. It was tough. They were what we almost are now."

Hooper left the program 16 years ago to work for the state Department of Corrections, as a case manager.



Scott Hooper had a record-setting 60 stolen bases in 1984, and Nebraska finished with a school-record of 196.

But he still refers to the Cornhuskers as "we," as well he should. Though he might have referred to himself in the note as "an ex-Husker," that was a matter of semantics.

"I speak, I think, for all of us that played in the 80s, and even the 70s, when I say, 'Man, we can't be any more proud of these guys,' what they're doing now. It's great," he said.

"They're a power, not only throughout the Midwest but through the country."

Dave Van Horn, the head coach in 1999, and Mike Anderson have brought the program to where it is. But the tradition encompasses those who preceded them, coaches as well as players.

No one understands that better

than Anderson, who arrived in 1995. He has embraced former players, as an assistant and now as head coach. "Mike makes me feel a part of it," said Hooper. "Every time I stop by to say hello, he makes me feel welcome. I feel fine with Mike at the helm and how he treats former players. He likes to see us. He'd probably like to see more of us come by."

Hooper played at Nebraska from 1981 to 1984. He came from Crete-Monee High School in suburban Chicago, picking the Cornhuskers mostly because he was most comfortable with them but also because he knew Steve Stanicek, another Chicago-area athlete recruited the year before.

He might have been destined to come to Nebraska, Hooper said.

When he made a recruiting visit to Iowa State, Nebraska was in Ames to play the Cyclones. And on his visit to Oklahoma State, the Cowboys played a game in the Big Eight Tournament — against Nebraska. “We won,” he said.

But back-to-back losses to Missouri sent the Cornhuskers packing.

Oklahoma State didn’t show much interest. It seemed as if the Cowboys “just wanted to give me a tryout,” Hooper said. “I just didn’t feel like I was wanted there as much as at Nebraska.

“I didn’t even think twice. I felt like I fit in. And knowing ‘Stano’ didn’t hurt.”

Hooper’s best season as a Cornhusker was his last. He earned first-team all-conference recognition as a third baseman and wrote his name in the Nebraska and Big Eight record books by stealing 60 bases. Teammate Jeff Carter stole 43, as the Cornhuskers finished with a school-record 196.

Coach John Sanders “called it the ‘veer’ offense,” said Hooper, who was caught stealing only four times.

SINGLE-SEASON STOLEN BASES

1. Scott Hooper (1984)	60
2. Ken Ramos (1989)	46
3. Jeff Carter (1984)	43
4. Eddie Anderson (1990)	41
4. Jeff Carter (1985)	41
6. Larry Mims (1986)	37
7. Chris Chavez (1981)	36
8. Jamal Strong (2000)	35
9. Jamal Strong (1999)	34
9. Ken Ramos (1988)	34

“We didn’t have the power. We had to manufacture a lot of runs.”

His record has held up for more than 20 years, without a serious challenge. Ken Ramos is second on the all-time list, with 46 steals in 1989. Alex Gordon led the team with 23 last season.

Though the game has changed, the record will fall, as all records do, Hooper said. “You get that one right guy in there, get him in the right spot in the lineup and get him in a groove.”

For now, however, his name is atop the list, with his photograph in the Cornhusker media guide. His son

Tyler (11) and daughter Morgan (6) “go to that every year. ‘Dad, you’re still there. They put you back in there.’ That’s my claim to fame, with my kids anyway,” he said. “I love it that they like it.”

Hooper describes himself as a “die-hard Husker baseball fan.” He has had season tickets since Hawks Field at Haymarket Park opened, and he uses them whenever Tyler or Morgan aren’t involved in activities. He planned to take the family to Minneapolis when the Cornhuskers played there recently.

“February rolls around and I’m ready to go,” he said.

Buck Beltzer Field retains a rugged charm in his memory. The outfield, where he played a handful of games, was “lumpy and uneven,” he said. “All through the spring you picked up football cleats. And it was like you were throwing out of a hole, throwing up-hill, especially from left field to home plate. You’d talk about wanting to put a chest protector on if you were going to block a ball hit out there.

“Thank God I didn’t have to play too many games in left field.”

Anderson, an assistant in 1999, read his note and “thought that was the coolest thing,” said Hooper. “He told me, ‘Hoop,’ man, I got the note.’ I think he mentioned to the guys that that’s what it means (to former players). And it did. It meant the world to me. I was proud, beaming for them.”

The Cornhuskers won the tournament the next two seasons and again last season, when they also won the conference regular-season championship for a third time. And, of course, they have made three trips to the College World Series in the past five seasons, raising fan expectations.

“Now they’re expected to go to the College World Series every year. It’s crazy,” Hooper said. “People just don’t realize how difficult it is to get to the post-season, play well and have breaks go your way. That’s how you get there. You’ve got to be playing your best ball.”

Winning the Big 12 Tournament in 1999 might pale by comparison with what has happened since. But it remains as special for him as when he wrote the note.

“I think to this day Mike remembers that,” he said. ■

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10 QUESTIONS

with **BRYCE NIMMO**

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Replacing Daniel Bruce wasn't going to be easy. Bryce Nimmo didn't expect it to be. But last season prepared him to seize the opportunity. He was able to learn not only from Bruce but also from other teammates now departed, such as Joe Simokaitis and Alex Gordon.

"They played the game in a great way, a very competitive way," said Nimmo. "Every day they went out there and competed hard to win. So I thought it was a great transition (season) for me."

He batted only .207 in 46 games, including .143 in the Big 12. "I wasn't playing a key role, just pinch-hit, be an outfielder once in a while," he said. "But I was very pleased to do that."

"I learned a lot, and it's helped me this year."

That was immediately apparent as he opened in center field and batted lead-off.

He went into the first home series against Alabama hitting .388, with a team-leading on-base percentage of .512. "That's my job, get on base any way I can," he said.

If you could eat only one thing for the next month, what would it be?

"Man, that's a tough question. I guess I'd want watermelon. For a whole month, I think I could eat watermelon. I love steak, but I couldn't eat that for a whole month. I could eat watermelon."

If you could excel at any sport except baseball at the collegiate level, what would you choose?

"I'd probably pick football. Quarterback would be great, especially here. You get 80,000 people watching you, there's no other thrill like that. Even I'm getting intense being in the stands during the 'Tunnel Walk,' so I can't imagine what it's like being a player out there. It's quite a sport to play. It's a thrill. I always try to get over to the games. It's fun to watch."

If you had a CD player and only three CDs, what would they be?

"I'm a Garth Brooks fan. One of them would have to be 'Garth Brooks, Greatest Hits.' Another one would be the Foo Fighters, and I like Creed, too, a little bit of everything."

Who's the funniest guy on the team?

"We've got a bunch of them. Matt Foust is probably one of the funniest, though. He's always optimistic. He has great character and personality that makes everything enjoyable. He's very funny, too. He'll tell jokes once in a while but it's just more how he comments on things. Things come to him quickly. He'll comment on them, and he'll use voices, too."

What's the best movie you've ever seen?

"I'm a movie guy. I've seen a lot of movies. I thought a great movie was 'Remember the Titans' just because it was based on a true story, and I thought it was a great story. But I also like 'Troy' and I'm a 'Lord of the Rings' fan. I like that stuff. Those are



great movies. I love comedy movies, too."

If a teammate came to visit you in Cheyenne, what would you want to show him?

"You'd probably have to show him Cheyenne Frontier Days, the largest outdoor rodeo in the world. It's a fun time, 10 days of fun. You go to the carnival. You go to concerts. If you're into the rodeo, you go to that. It's exciting. They've got parades. They've got a pancake breakfast. There's a lot of stuff to do. You'd have to show them that, at the end of July."

Johnny Damon or Andruw Jones?

"I guess Johnny Damon because I think he plays the game a little bit harder. They're both weird guys. Andruw Jones is very talented, and Johnny Damon has a weak arm. But I like the guys who play the game hard."

What do you remember most about your recruiting visit to Nebraska?

"I remember how professional it was. We were on a schedule. We went everywhere. They were out there to get me to fall in love with the place, and it was like a business trip. I liked that a lot. Also, Curtis Ledbetter hosted me, and he was a great host. We went out and shot some birds, so I probably remember that the most."

Sky diving, bungee jumping or rock climbing?

"Sky diving, I've been told I need to do it. That's probably the biggest thrill out of all those things. Rock climbing takes a lot of strength. But sky diving is just falling out of a plane. That would be exhilarating. I have some friends who have done it, and they tell me I should try it out. So maybe I will."

What's your favorite TV show?

"I guess the one I watch the most is 'Friends' even though it's been over forever. My roommate's girlfriend brought over every season of 'Friends,' and that's all we have to watch right now. We don't have cable. We're going to get on that, fix it. Casey (Klapperich) and I watch it. Johnny Dorn's down in the basement, so he doesn't watch. He's not big on it. He likes 'Everybody Loves Raymond,' I think." ■

'Gung-Ho from the Get-Go'

*Jensen accepted
the closer's role
without hesitation*

Brett Jensen had a school-record 16 saves (in 17 opportunities) last year in his first season as Nebraska's closer.

By Mike Babcock

Most pitchers prefer starting over relieving. After all, starting is the "glory role, the job you think about when you're a little kid," Brett Jensen said recently.

He was no different. He was always a starter before he got to Nebraska.

However, when former Cornhusker pitching coach Rob Childress suggested that Jensen become a reliever, and more specifically a closer, he accepted without hesitation.

"I was gung-ho about it from the get-go," said Jensen.

Clearly, his enthusiasm was justified. Last season he earned third-team All-America recognition, with a school-record 16 saves (in 17 opportunities) and a 1.96 ERA. He made 33 appearances, all in relief, striking out 46 in 46 innings while allowing only 36 hits and walking nine.

And this season he has picked up

right where he left off.

The preseason All-American never imagined his career would come to this. In fact, when he was in high school in Eagle Grove, Iowa, he figured he would play basketball in college, as his brother Greg did at Colorado. He has a basketball player's build, at 6-foot-7 and 190 pounds.

Several small schools and junior colleges recruited him to play basketball. And if he had decided to do that, he probably would have gone to Northern State in South Dakota.

Though he was successful at it, baseball was always "a secondary sport," he said. Iowa's high school baseball season is during the summer, so basketball was his school-year focus. He'd pick up a baseball in April, and when the season was over, he'd start preparing for basketball.

Even after he settled on baseball, committing to Iowa Central Community College, he never imagined pitching at the major college level, with the potential to continue play professionally.

He was a 23rd-round pick of the Washington Nationals last June but opted to return for his senior season. The decision wasn't difficult. He was "pretty set on coming back," he said.

"I was in no rush to leave here, no rush at all."

Ironically, he was in no rush to come to Nebraska, which he could have done right out of high school, following a whirlwind recruiting experience that had him visiting campus a couple of days before fall-semester classes began in 2002. But the whole thing just happened too fast.

Jensen pitched his high school team to the Class 2A state title as a senior. His record was 11-0. His ERA was 0.52. And he struck out 100 while walking only four. He received the Bob Feller Award as the state's top 2A pitcher, and drew recruiting interest from Northern Iowa and Nebraska, which received a videotape of him from an Eagle Grove resident whom he didn't really know.

After watching the videotape, Childress gave him a call. Jensen was surprised.

"Coach Childress said, 'I don't look at many tapes and find guys we want. But there was something on your tape I really liked,' " Jensen said. "He'd never seen me pitch in person."

Later that week, Jensen and his mom, Linda, made the 4-hour drive to Lincoln to visit.

Jensen, a two-time member of the Big 12 Commissioner's Honor Roll, was accepted for admittance, and Childress suggested he stay in a hotel a day or two until he could be assigned a dorm room. "It was all so fast," said Jensen. So he told Childress thanks but no thanks and returned home. Childress told him that Nebraska was still interested and would follow his progress at Iowa Central.

"I think I made a great choice," Jensen said. "I couldn't have been happier with it, getting into the scheme of things. It was kind of a nice stepping stone to Division I baseball. Being a junior college pitcher on a pretty successful team, it just kind of helped me get acclimated to the college game."

Pretty successful? Iowa Central was runner-up at the NJCAA national tournament, and he posted an 11-1 record with a 2.79 ERA. More importantly, perhaps, he pitched 80.2 innings. Had

he been at Nebraska, he might have redshirted, or pitched only a handful of innings.

Pitching at Iowa Central bolstered his confidence and gave him "a running start."

He worked 30.1 innings his first season at Nebraska, in 20 appearances, all in relief, becoming a set-up pitcher for Mike Sillman, the Cornhuskers' closer two years ago.

With Sillman's departure, the closer's job would be open and "I think that was a role I kind of wanted," Jensen said. "We obviously had three suitable starters for the weekends."

"I was used to late-innings stuff, and I knew I would be one of the guys who would be up for that job. So when he (Childress) said it, I was ready to go; wherever I was needed."

Jensen already had a closer's temperament, the ability to let things go, whether good or bad.

"You have to have a short-term memory, be ready for any situation," he said.

"If you go out there and get hit around a little bit, maybe blow a save or something like that, it's important to let that go and compete the next time you get out there. You can't take what happened yesterday, no matter if it

was good or bad, to the mound with you today."

Closers have to be ready at a moment's notice. They never know when they'll get the call. "You wake up in the morning saying, 'Today could be the day,' every single day," he said.

"You've got to be able to go right now. Your pitches have to be crisp; they have to be where you want them, when you want them, especially in the ninth inning. You need to get the ball over the plate."

When he became the closer, he changed his "pitch repertoire," dropping a "slurve" in favor of a slider, which "adds a whole new part to my game" and complements his fastball and change-up.

He's confident in those pitches. And the coaches are confident in him. Dave Bingham, who replaced Childress, hasn't made dramatic changes. Though he's different from Childress, he shares "a lot of the same philosophies," said Jensen. "It's the same kind of stuff. It's comfortable."

He's comfortable and the coaches are comfortable with him. "I think when Coach (Mike) Anderson gives me the ball, he's fully confident in what I'm going to do," Jensen said. ■

Bob Devaney, 1915-1997



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Added Burden

With husband overseas, Aumua leans on coaches and teammates for support

By Todd Henrichs

It's hard to imagine what her home-run trot would be like, considering that as a speedy slap hitter, Nebraska's Lizzy Aumua is usually halfway to first base before the softball ever gets to a fielder.

Then again, it's hard to imagine Aumua actually driving a home run.

Aumua, herself, laughs at the thought but is serious when she says hitting a home run is one of the goals for her senior season. She's been working on what she calls a "power slap," and under the right conditions, Aumua believes she could take the ball out of the ballpark.

"I've been working hard on that," she said.

Aumua has had to work hard to keep her mind off all that's going on in her life as Nebraska's program, a qualifier for the Women's College World Series in 1998 and 2002, attempts to return to national prominence after a disappointing 2005 season.

Aumua carries a big load as NU's leadoff hitter and center fielder, yet that in no way compares to the burden she carries away from the field. Wes Aumua, her husband of 18 months, will spend this softball sea-

Senior Lizzy Aumua, NU's leadoff hitter and center fielder, was batting .580 after 12 games.

Scott Bruhn

son half a world away on an aircraft carrier functioning in support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Wes Aumua, a naval firefighter, was deployed in November.

"My mind is never off of Wes," Aumua said. "It can be distracting sometimes because even when I'm in class, I find myself thinking about him a lot.

"Softball is kind of my refuge where I can get away. I try not to bring the missing-him aspect onto the field with me, but I do try to bring the emotion. That kind of drives me."

Aumua is coming off a successful junior season — her first at the Division I level — in which she hit .378, drove in 17 and threw out six baserunners.

Despite the obvious distractions, Aumua got off to another quick start this season. Through 12 games, she was hitting .580 with 14 runs scored and 5 RBIs.

Nebraska's team, ranked 21st in the preseason top 25, was 12-2, off to one of the best starts in head coach Rhonda Revelle's 14 seasons. A year ago, the Huskers finished just 36-23.

"Last year wasn't a bad year," Revelle said. "You finish in the top 25, you can't consider it a bad year.

"But the standards of Nebraska softball have grown to be such that that doesn't feel good enough. They're really committed to get back on a prominent level within the national scene."

Players say that the team chemistry is already different from last season, a year when Aumua admits she was often unhappy. Now, even with her husband stationed overseas, she says the support of her coaches and teammates, along with her family, is what helps her through the rough spots.

Revelle says you can tell the occasions when Aumua gets a chance to communicate with her husband by phone or email. There are other times, however, when all communication is shut down.

Those weeks, Aumua says she's sleeps little and cries a lot. Teammates, who admittedly find it difficult to relate, often invite her to come stay at their place.

"Being on this team, it's not like any other team," Aumua said. "It's not just about softball in this pro-



Lizzy Aumua

Other than hitting her first career home run, Aumua's goal for the season would be to have her husband on hand in May for Senior Day at Bowlin Stadium and her graduation

ceremony.

gram, it's about life. "And so coming here and meeting these people, I don't just want to achieve things softball-wise but achieve things that will stay with me for the rest of my life."

ceremony.

Wes Aumua's deployment is expected to last six months. Until then, the Huskers will count on Lizzy Aumua for hits just as she leans on her coaches and teammates for support.

"I believe everything happens for a reason, and I'm here for a reason," Aumua said. "The girls and coaches on this team have just been really amazing.

"I believe if I were at any other school, things wouldn't be going as well for me." ■

Todd Henrichs covers the Nebraska softball team for the Lincoln Journal Star. He can be reached at 473-7439 or thenrichs@journalstar.com

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Perfectionist

***NU pole vaulter
Scotten is only
having fun when
he's doing well***

By Terry Douglass

Ray Scotten's combination of intensity and intellect serves as a source of intrigue for Nebraska Pole Vault coach Kris Grimes.

"He is kind of a contradiction in that way because he brings such intensity to the runway," Grimes said. "Because of that, you wouldn't necessarily view him as a thinker, but he definitely is always in the process of trying to figure out how to make things better."

But while Scotten's search for perfection is admirable, the trait can also be a hindrance. That was the case in last month's Big 12 Conference indoor track and field championship when Grimes said Scotten started the competition thinking too much.

"Even on jumps where I have a great jump, I would go back to (Grimes), and the first thing I would tell him was what I did wrong," Scotten said. "For me, it's almost like it's never going to be good enough unless it's almost perfect. That's just how I am."

"When you're really competitive in a sport, some people are just a little bit pickier than others when it comes to that. Some people like to go out and just have fun, but I'm only having fun if I'm doing well."

But after nearly an entire indoor season of watching

RAY SCOTTEN
SENIOR POLE VAULTER

Scotten perform below his usual standards, Grimes decided at the Big 12 championships that enough was enough.

"Finally, I grabbed him by the arm, and I just said, 'Ray, you're fabulous. You don't need to think. Stop thinking so much, and just make the bar,'" Grimes said. "It was like flipping a switch. It was like boom, and he just went and he was making bars."

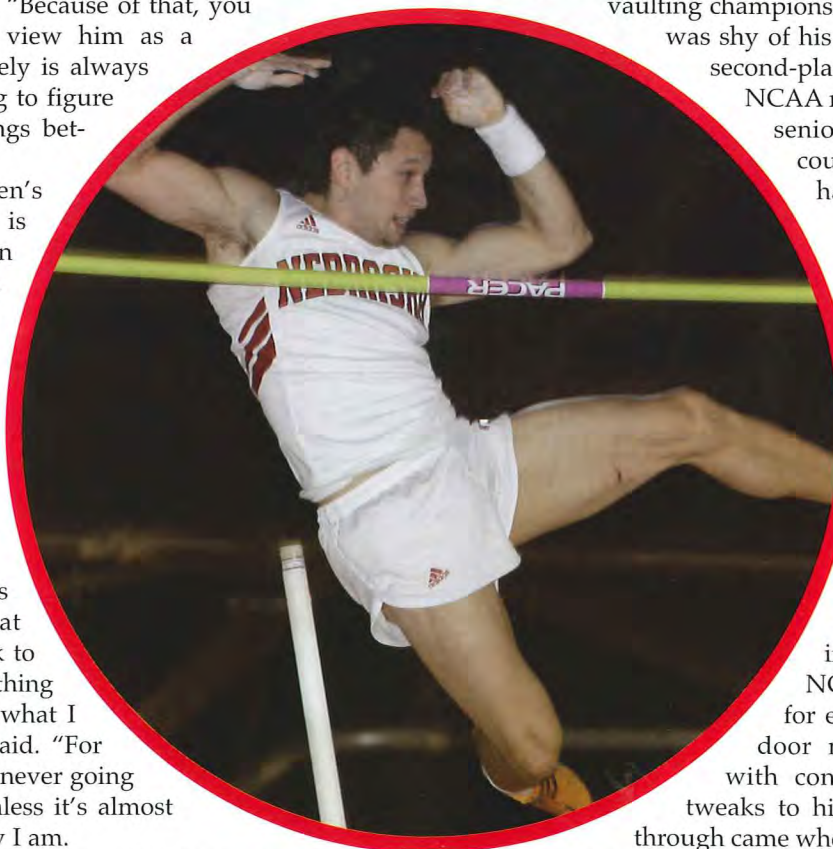
"It was like he finally released himself to get after it."

Scotten, who had failed to break the 17-foot barrier this year leading up to the Big 12 indoor, cleared 17-9 and captured his second consecutive conference indoor pole vaulting championship. Although the height was shy of his 18-0 1/2 effort during a second-place finish at last year's NCAA national indoor meet, the senior from Indianapolis couldn't have been much happier.

"It was very satisfying," Scotten said. "It has just been a real tough season, not jumping as high as I knew I could and whatnot. For it to come together at the first meet that really mattered all year was very gratifying."

After a junior season at Nebraska that saw Scotten take second in the pole vault at the NCAA indoor meet and tie for eighth at the NCAA outdoor nationals, he struggled with consistency while making tweaks to his technique. The breakthrough came when Scotten switched from a 15 1/2- to a 16-foot pole.

"After that, I was just booming bars — I was way over everything I jumped," said Scotten, whose career best is an 18-2 1/2 vault outdoors. "I just wasn't consistent enough to make it over the big bars. Then, at conference, I was boom-



Scott Bruhn

ing every bar I jumped again, but I was finally clearing big bars again.

"It pretty much all came together for me at conference."

Clearing 17-9 helped Scotten earn a No. 8 national ranking heading into the NCAA indoor national championships at Fayetteville, Ark. It also proved to Grimes that Scotten is the ultimate "gamer."

"One thing about Ray is that he's a mature athlete and Ray knows when it's time to get things done," Grimes said. "He intuitively understands — almost to make himself a little bit nervous, I think — how to get things started rolling at the right time.

"I kept telling Coach (Gary) Pepin that things were going to be fine, and he kind of stressed me out a little bit, but you just knew that Ray had that same confidence. I think he was just saving his energy up for late in the season."

Grimes said Scotten possesses all the tools to be a great vaulter. However, Grimes said the senior's success has come at a price.

"Ray has extraordinary strength, and he's willing to work very, very hard, and he has to work hard if he

wants to take advantage of that ability," Grimes said. "He works hard in the weight room, and he does an unusually high volume of training on the track for the vaulter."

That dedication has allowed Scotten to come up big for the Huskers since transferring from Southern Illinois following a sophomore season where he finished fifth nationally indoors and 11th nationally outdoors for the Salukis in 2004.

The 11th-place effort came despite an ill-fated practice run where Scotten turned his ankle on his approach, but still bent the pole enough to fling him into the bleachers, puncturing a lung. But instead of bowing out of the competition, Scotten cleared 17-8 1/2.

That performance, perhaps, best sums up Scotten's intensity and fearlessness, which is almost a prerequisite for pole vaulters. After all, he admits to being a bit of an adrenaline junkie.

"You go to theme park, and you don't want to ride the little weenie roller-coasters, you want to ride the big, bad ones," Scotten said. "It's just more of a thrill."

The eternal search for that incredible feeling of making the perfect vault is one thing Scotten loves about the sport.

"It's about as good a feeling as you can get," Scotten said. "If there's anything that you do and you do it perfectly, you just feel great about it.


"You're just completely and totally happy."

That's also the feeling Scotten has about his choice to transfer to Nebraska. His decision was made because of a coaching change and a feeling that there was a lack of support for the track and field team at Southern Illinois.

"The indoor track didn't even really belong to the track team," Scotten said. "If we wanted to pole vault, we had to reserve it ahead of time. Otherwise, if two people who wanted to play tennis reserved it ahead of time, we didn't get to vault.

"Here, it's completely different. Everyone is behind you, and I love that." ■

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the *Grand Island (Neb.) Independent*. He can be reached at terry.douglass@charter.net.



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A Pair of Seconds

The Nebraska men's and women's track and field teams both finished second to Texas at the Big 12 championships at Lincoln in late February.

The Husker men were looking for a seventh consecutive conference indoor title, the women a third in a row.

Nebraska's individual champions in the women's competition were: Ashley Selig in the pentathlon, Jenny Green in the pole vault, Becky Breisch in the shot put and Priscilla Lopes in the 60-meter hurdles. The Cornhusker men's champions were: Ray Scotten in the pole vault, Arturs Abolins in the long jump, Daniel Roper in the triple jump, Courtney Jones in the 60-meter hurdles and Dmitrijs Milkevics in the 800 meters.

Women Team Scoring

Texas 125, Nebraska 118, Texas Tech 68, Baylor 61, Oklahoma 61, Kansas State 60 1/2, Missouri 58, Texas A&M 56 1/2, Kansas 45, Oklahoma State 35, Colorado 33, Iowa State 19

Nebraska Finishers

Pentathlon — 1. Ashley Selig 4336, 2. Sara Jane Baker 4203, 7. Kim Shubert 3611

High jump — 4. (tie) Baker 5-8, 6. Ashlee Dickinson 5-8, 7. Amanda Benson 5-8

Pole vault — 1. Jenny Green 13-5 1/4, 2. Jenna Blubaugh 13-1 1/2, 3. (tie) Jessie Graff 12-7 1/2

Shot put — 1. Becky Breisch 57-6 1/4

Weight throw — 6. Tamara Solari 61-4

60 hurdles — 1. Priscilla Lopes :07.92

60 dash — 2. Lopes :07.29

200 — 2. Lopes :23.50

400 — 7. Sheryl Morgan :55.55

800 — 3. Elizabeth Lange 2:07.91

1,000 — 6. Danute Ceika 2:54.49

Mile — 7. Kim Pancoast 4:53.57, 8. Natalja Zarcenko 4:55.06

5,000 — 5. Channing Anseth 16:38.54

4x400 — 6. (Morgan, Baker, Justine Roach, Selig) 3:44.50

Distance medley — 6. (Betsy Miller, Selig, Kim Pancoast, Joslyn Dalton) 11:44.68

Men

Team Scoring

Texas 127, Nebraska 100, Baylor 79, Texas Tech 72, Kansas State 67, Kansas 63, Colorado 61, Missouri 43, Texas A&M 41, Oklahoma 40, Iowa State 26, Oklahoma State 21

Nebraska Finishers

Heptathlon — 4. Skyler Reising 2989

Shot put — 7. Keith Lloyd 55-2

Pole vault — 1. Ray Scotten 17-9, 6. Nic Peterson 16-11, 7. Gable Baldwin 16-11

High jump — 4. Dusty Jonas 7-4 1/4, 5. Aaron Plas 7-3

Long jump — 1. Arturs Abolins 25-8 1/4, 4. LeRon Williams 24-5 3/4, 7. Demea Carter 24-1

Triple jump — 1. Daniel Roper 50-9 1/2

60 hurdles — 1. Courtney Jones :07.74, 6. Aaron Ross :07.93

60 — 8. Oliver Williams, Jr. :06.81

200 — 2. Nate Probasco :21.17

400 — 6. Andrew Pearson :48.76

600 — 7. Nathan Kumm 1:10.76

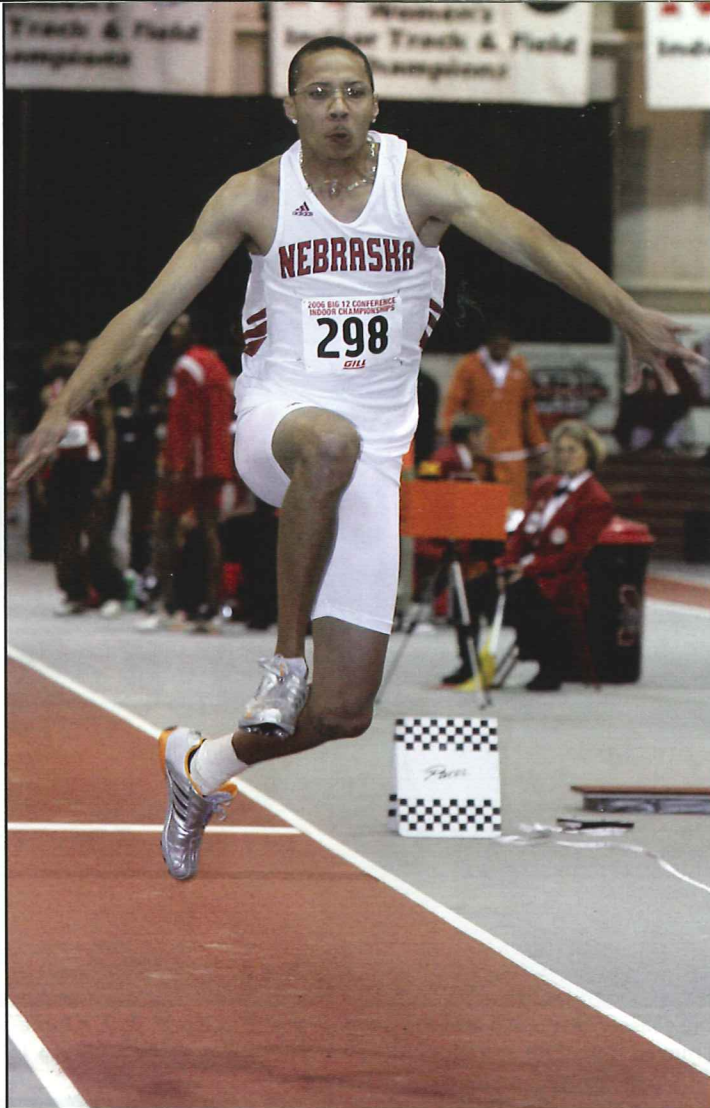
800 — 1. Dmitrijs Milkevics 1:46.46

1,000 — 5. Pete van der Westhuizen 2:23.52

4x400 relay — 4. (Pearson, Milkevics, Gatis Spunde, Probasco) 3:10.64

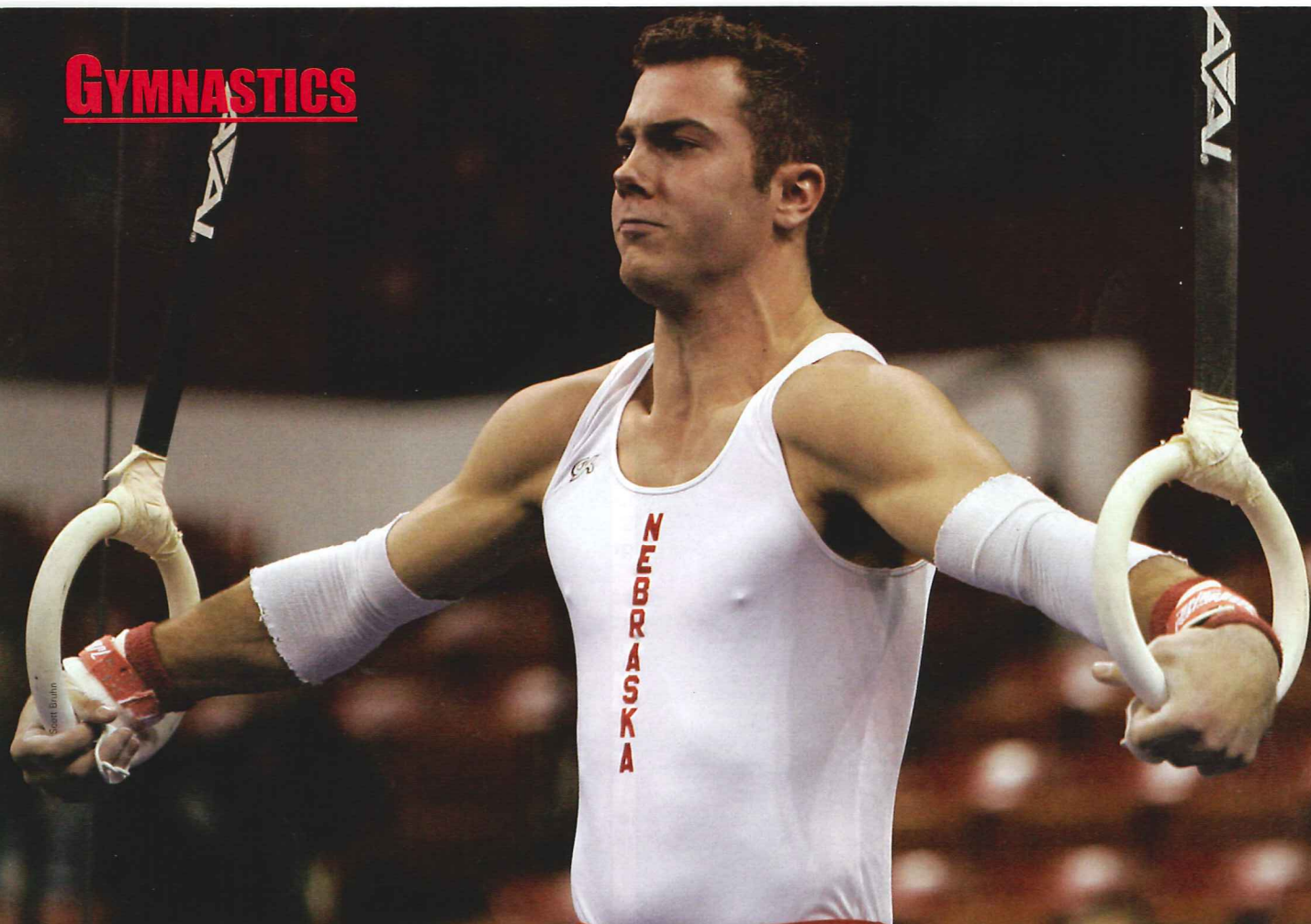
Nebraska's individual champions included (clockwise from top left) Ashley Selig (pentathlon), Daniel Roper (triple jump), Arturs Abolins (long jump), Priscilla Lopes (60 hurdles) and Becky Breisch (shot put).





Photos by Scott Bruhn

GYMNASTICS



The Nebraska men's gymnastics team earned its highest ranking of the season as it broke into the nation's top-10 at No. 9, with a three-score average of 207.00. Sophomore Stephen Tétrault (on the rings above) moved from 13th to 12th on the pommel horse and from 16th to 14th in the all-around, and senior Derric Wood (below) moved from 15th to eighth in the nation's high bar rankings.



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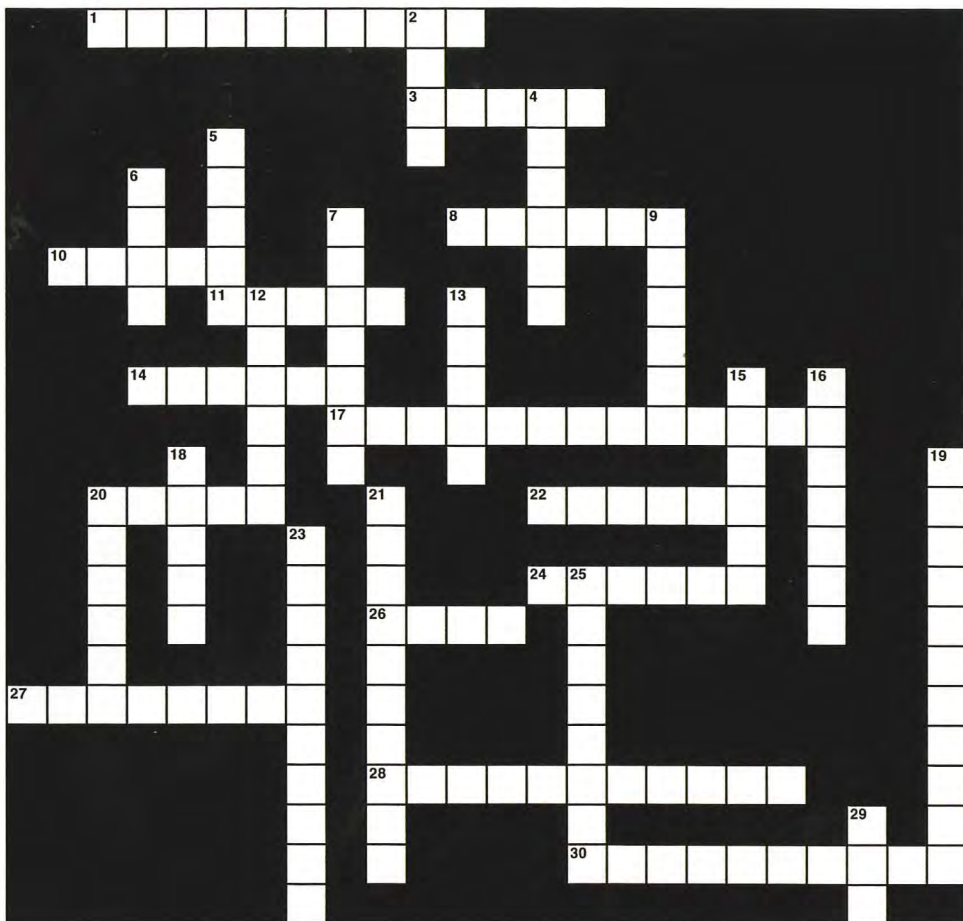
ACROSS

- 1 April 15 event
- 3 End of Memorial Stadium where new addition is being built
- 8 Junior college running back recruit
- 10 Winner in 2005 Spring Game
- 11 Leading receiver in 2005
- 14 Nate Swift's high school teammate
- 17 Opponent in 2006 opener
- 20 Cornerback moving to safety
- 22 2006 recruit participating in spring practice
- 24 Leading tackler in 2005
- 26 Academic All-America running back
- 27 Head coach in 1961
- 28 1983 Outland Trophy winner
- 30 Basketball point guard

DOWN

- 2 Academic All-America lineman
- 4 1997 Outland Trophy winner
- 5 Junior college defensive back recruit
- 6 Frank Solich's new school
- 7 Turner Gill's new school
- 9 Opponent in 2007 opener
- 12 Newest addition to coaching staff
- 13 Basketball center
- 15 Baseball team's closer
- 16 1992 Outland Trophy winner
- 18 2005 national champion
- 19 Baseball All-America pitcher
- 20 Ex-NU third baseman drafted by Royals
- 21 Ex-Husker basketball player whose No. 52 was retired
- 23 Ex-Husker in 2006 Winter Olympics
- 25 Leader in sacks in 2005
- 29 First road opponent in 2006

Answers in May issue



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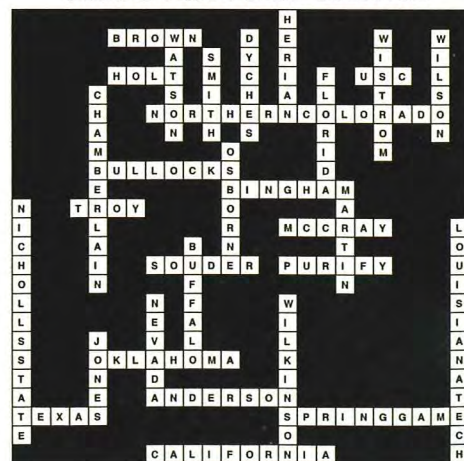
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Stayin' Alive?

What looked like a promising conference season fell apart during a 2-6 second half



**Mike
BABCOCK**

AS IT TURNS OUT, this isn't the final word on Nebraska men's basketball coach Barry Collier.

When this issue of Huskers Illustrated went to the printer, the sixth-seeded Cornhuskers were preparing to play Oklahoma in the second round of the Big 12 Tournament at Dallas. They advanced to the second round, for the first time under

Collier, by defeating Missouri 71-64.

On the previous Sunday, they lost to the Tigers at Columbia 65-64, after squandering an 11-point lead in the closing minutes. The loss, their third in a row, left them 7-9 in conference play.

It also stoked the fire that has engulfed Collier during his sixth season at Nebraska.

That anything short of winning the Big 12 Tournament, and earning an automatic NCAA Tournament bid, could put out the fire was unlikely. By the time the Cornhuskers headed to Dallas, with a 17-12 record overall, the consensus seemed to be that Collier's days at Nebraska were numbered.

A headline on the front page of sports in the Omaha World-Herald on the morning of the tournament's first round proclaimed: "Keeping Collier would be insane."

The newspaper certainly couldn't be accused of hedging.

Though less blunt, the Lincoln Journal Star was no less realistic about the likelihood of Collier's continued employment at Nebraska. Simply put, the numbers haven't added up.

The most significant numbers, of course, are wins and losses. The Missouri victory improved Collier's record to 88-89, including 36-60 in the Big 12 and 1-6 against Creighton.

This season's Creighton loss was by 70-44, in case you've forgotten.

The game drew 15,621 to the Qwest Center in Omaha, the largest crowd ever to watch a basketball game in the state. Average attendance at the Devaney Sports Center this season was less than half of that. In fact, Nebraska's home average (6,593) was the lowest in the Sports Center's 30-year history — although, unlike in the past, reported attendance this season was actual rather than paid.

Diminished enthusiasm for Cornhusker basketball is an important part of the Collier equation. A change could boost interest, at least in the short term, and sell tickets.

Still, midway through the conference schedule, Collier appeared to be making the most of the opportunity he was given following a 70-67 loss to Missouri in the first round of

the Big 12 Tournament. The team was 5-3, with the less imposing half remaining, in position to win 20 games and earn a first-round bye in the conference tournament. An NCAA Tournament bid wasn't out of the question.

But the Cornhuskers won only twice in the second half of the conference season. Hopes of finishing 10-6 were amended to 9-7 and then to 8-8. Even that didn't happen.

Though athletic director Steve Pederson and executive associate athletic director Marc Boehm refused to discuss Collier's status — a consistent in-season stance — a dinner with ESPN analyst and former Utah coach Rick Majerus at an Omaha restaurant in late February led to speculation about that status.

Majerus, whom Pederson has known for several years, was in Omaha for a speaking engagement the next night. And the dinner was hardly clandestine. Nevertheless, the fire flared up.

Dismissing Collier would be expensive, with two years remaining on his contract. And his dismissal might have roster repercussions, particularly if assistant Scott Spinelli were to go as well.

Roburt Sallie, who made a late-season oral commitment, told the Journal Star that if something were to change, he would have to reconsider — and so, presumably, would his friend and former teammate at Laurinburg Institute, Jamel White, a Cornhusker freshman and another Spinelli recruit.

Collier could go, of course, and Spinelli could stay. But that doesn't often happen.

In any case, Sallie also told the Journal Star that Pederson had assured him Collier would be the coach. The catch was, Pederson's assurance came before the 2-6 collapse.

Kansas State coach Jim Wooldridge, also in his sixth season, was fired after the Wildcats lost to Texas Tech in the first game of the Big 12 Tournament. And reporters were poised for the possibility of a second firing following the final game on the first day. But Nebraska won, allowing Collier to coach another day.

The victory also increased the Cornhuskers' chances of receiving an NIT bid, assuming they didn't win three more in Dallas and advance to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1998.

That was the least likely of all possibilities here.

By now, maybe the situation will have been resolved, with Collier's status determined. Or maybe the speculation will continue unabated as Nebraska prepares to play in the NIT. When this issue went to the printer, the only certainly was that Pederson and Boehm would have the final word. ■



Barry Collier's Huskers were the No. 6 seed in the Big 12 Tournament.